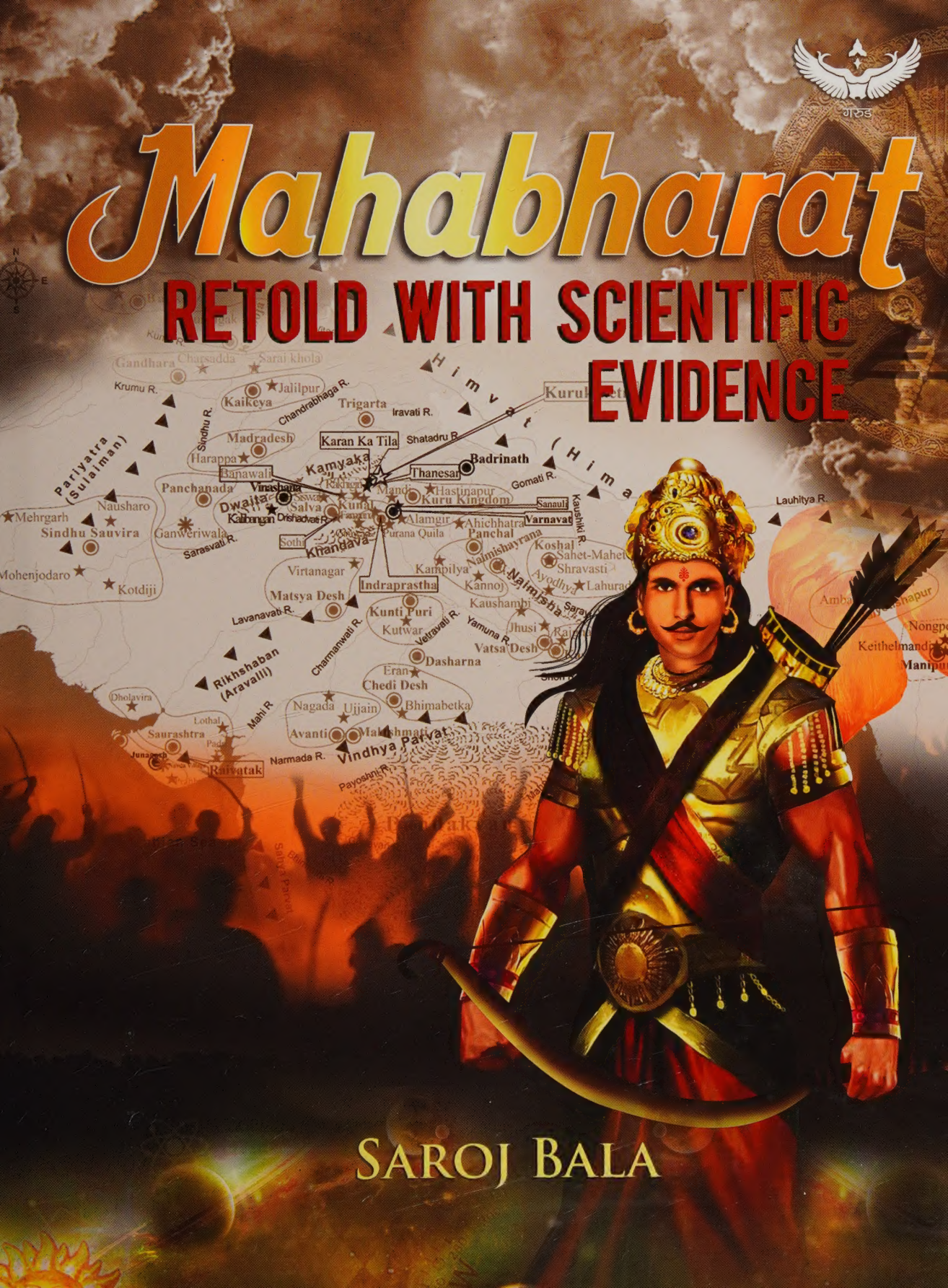
Mahabharat

RETOLD WITH SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE



SAROJ BALA

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About the Book

This book is a narration of important events of Mahabharat war with exact dates. It is backed by scientific evidence entailing five years of intense research. Sky simulations of sequential astronomical references, using Planetarium and Stellarium software, spanning a period of 52 years prove that the war was fought in the year 3139 BCE.

This book will compel the reader to look at the evidence and re-calibrate his understanding of ancient India. Specifically, if Mahabharat war was fought in 3139 BCE, are we not supposed to conclude that the Harappan Civilisation was actually the Vedic civilisation of Mahabharat era?

The reader will be enthralled to look at the evidence of the Kali Era conjunction in the morning of 19th February 3102 BCE, heralding the beginning of Kaliyuga.

Besides astronomy, the book puts forth evidence from seven disciplines of science. It proves the profound philosophy of Bhagavad Gita was actually passed on to the world on Shukla Ekadashi of Margashirsha Month in 3139 BCE.

Most of the excavated sites, having carbon dates of samples and artefacts around 3000 BCE and associated with Harappan civilisation, were actually located within the territories of kingdoms which participated in Mahabharat war.

Also, this book takes note of different claims made by esteemed scholars on the date of Mahabharat war, and establishes that the war took place in the year 3139 BCE, adding to the healthy discourse on the timing of Mahabharat war.

The research for this book entailed detailed reading and interpretation of Mahabharat by Sanskrit scholars; getting exact sky-views through the software, calculating and adjusting for the changes in astronomical situations down thousands of years and re-visiting the findings to make them error-free.

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गरुड

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Saroj Bala
Former Director, Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas

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Dedicated to the memory of Bharat Ratna Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam

This great benefactor of humanity and a scientist par excellence had once said, "In India, the core culture goes beyond time. It precedes the arrival of Islam; it precedes the arrival of Christianity. It is when we accept India in all its splendid glory that, with a shared past as a base, we can look forward to a shared future of peace and prosperity, of creation and abundance. Our past is there with us forever. It has to be nurtured in good faith, not destroyed in exercises of political one-upmanship".

This great Indian inspired me to reconstruct India's ancient history of Vedic and Epic eras on a purely objective and scientific basis, in which all Indians can have shared pride. Therefore, after dedicating my book 'Ramayan Retold with Scientific Evidences' to him, I offer this book 'Mahabharat Retold with Scientific Evidence' as a tribute to this venerated soul.

Also dedicated to
Dr Hari Goyal of Artemis Hospital

This doctor, par excellence, enabled me to write this book by giving me four years of quality life when I had lost all hopes of very survival! Dr Hari Goyal is intelligent, considerate and caring. With his in-depth knowledge of disease and its treatment, he adjusts the therapy by balancing the medical needs with the personality and temperament of each patient. I owe the writing of this book to him!

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Foreword

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Ms. Saroj Bala ji's this book *Mahabharat Retold with Scientific Evidence* is a very significant book, just as her earlier work *Ramayan Retold with Scientific Evidence* was. In the ongoing, often motivated, intellectual-cultural debate about the typological status of the epic *Mahabharata* as a purely imaginative, though splendid and unequalled, narrative composition, or a knowledge text that is an actual record of cataclysmic events that took place in Bharatavarsha almost 5000 years ago, a characteristic text of India's oral culture composed anonymously and serially in every performance or retelling and that ended up as an encyclopedia of India's civilization that on its own assertion incorporates-

"...deep meanings of the Vedas...the essence of *Shastras*...exposition of auxiliary sciences (*vedangas*)...*itihasa, purana*...the exposition of past, present and future...old age, death, fear, disease, and the reality or otherwise of objects...duties and stages of life...vegetation, earth, cosmos...planets and stars...birth and death...places of pilgrimage, lands and peoples, rivers and mountains, forests and seas...buildings, forts and cities...languages and ethnic groups...arts and crafts...all that is necessary for a fulfilled life and all that is necessary to ensure the welfare of people... lineages and genealogies...all this has been expounded in this *grantha*...(MB 1.1.62-70)".

To substantiate the 'imperial' reluctance to accept either the antiquity or the knowledge-content of a non-Western text that might esteem its civilization above

the contemporary, the Western academy swings the historicity parameter based on the self-acclaimed epistemology of 'scientific evidence'; it invalidates the knowledge-typology that classifies *Mahabharata* as *itihasa*, a record of events that actually happened. It is here that this book is a powerful counter-argument in that it provides astronomical, 'scientific' data to authenticate the chronological succession of events in the epic narration.

The book has the structure of a narrative – it tells the story of the *Mahabharata* war with exact dates of the important events in this catastrophic war determined by using pure scientific evidence which attests the major events by the astronomical configurations observable in the sky at that point of time.

The most impressive part of the book is its building up of the scientific evidence pertaining to diverse sciences. The sky simulations of astronomical references at the time of important events narrated in *Mahabharata* are breathtaking! It must have been a huge task for the author to go through more than one lakh verses of *Mahabharata*, identify the dateable planetary references, and then generate the corresponding sequential sky simulations.

At least twenty sky views using planetarium soft wares, which are spread over time sequence of 52 years, have been generated and included in the book. The sky-simulation depicting the location of seven planets vis-à-vis sixteen *nakshatras* on 10th October in 3139 BCE is indeed unique and firmly relates the war to 3139 BCE.

What I find as the most remarkable reconstruction is the Map in which Geo co-ordinates of the kingdoms which fought during the *Mahabharata* War have been plotted. Within the territories of these kingdoms the GPS plotting of excavated sites, described as Early and Mature Harappan sites in India's history books, has been depicted. This Map leaves no doubt that the entire land of India was in the process of getting civilized and cultured more than 5100 years back. This Map could prove of great help to those who are developing Shri Krishna and the *Mahabharata* Tourism Circuits, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The Map also makes it clear that during that era the territorial boundaries of India extended right from Gandhara in the north to the ocean in the South; Sindhu-Sauvira in the West to Pragajyotishapur in the East.

Experiencing this profound research and scholarship has been an extraordinary experience for me. I offer my respect to the author for such an original book that provides trustworthy proofs for the first time from different disciplines of science to establish the historicity of the *Mahabharata* era, the antiquity of India's culture, and the exact dates and duration of the Great War. The book shall be great reading for all those who take pride in India's cultural and historical heritage. Historians

also must go through this book and then ponder whether the history we have been writing and teaching has not been partial, inaccurate and incomplete. The book shall also be a model of research with its unquestionable method for reconstructing the ancient history of India based on multidisciplinary evidence from diverse sciences.

Six highly informative appendices, necessary to understand the analysis of the epic text, are followed by a Glossary of keywords and a very extensive bibliography to enable further study and research. Evidently, an enormous and dedicated scholarship has gone into this book indispensable for every student of *Mahabharata.*

—Kapil Kapoor
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Introduction

This book is not just another story of Mahabharat! The book in your hand would display and prove how science can prove the truth behind traditional beliefs. For thousands of years, Indians have believed that the Mahabharat war was fought around 3139 BCE, profound sermon of Bhagavad Gita was imparted by Lord Krishna in the month of Margashirsha when Gita Jayanti is celebrated till date. We have believed that Kaliyuga started in February 3102 BCE, and most of the kingdoms of the Mahabharat era still exist in India. However, half-hearted scientific investigations carried out by many scientists and scholars only gave confusing and demoralizing results. Mahabharat contains more than one lakh verses and more than 200 references to planetary positions. However, many scientists and scholars read only 30-40 verses and then fixed many different astronomical and archaeological dates for Mahabharat war, spanning the period from 5567 BCE to 575 BCE. That only enabled the pseudo-scholars to declare that Mahabharat was only a mythological story composed by Poet Vyas and that it had nothing to do with the history of India!

Nevertheless, the question continually agitating my mind was what is the truth, and how could it be ascertained using comprehensive multi-disciplinary scientific means and evidence? The only way to put an end to this dilemma was to find scientifically valid answers to the under-mentioned questions –

1. Was Mahabharat war really fought in Kurukshetra? If yes; when, where and why was it fought?
2. Can the exact dates of important events narrated in Mahabharat be determined from the astronomical references by making use of modern planetarium softwares and other similar computer programmes?
3. Are there any proofs from carbon dates of excavated samples, artefacts and plants, and other scientific pieces of evidence to support that hundreds of kingdoms mentioned in Mahabharat, actually existed in India 5000 years back?

4. What is the proof that various kinds of weapons, ornaments, utensils, plants, herbs and the things alike existed during astronomically determined dates of Mahabharat era?
5. Were Shri Krishna, five Pandava brothers and Duryodhana historical characters? Whether they had taken birth as human beings; if yes, is there any scientifically verifiable evidence?

This book contains credible and convincing scientific answers to all these questions. As a result, it firmly establishes that the Mahabharat era was not mythology but a part of the history of ancient India. Such convincing evidence from multiple disciplines of science has also proved that the conventional beliefs of people have been by and large correct. The sequential Sky simulations included in this book show that the Mahabharat war was fought in 3139 BCE. Evidence relating to carbon dating of the excavated samples, artefacts and plants, dealt with in great details in this book, has supported this astronomical date sequence. This has also led to the conclusion that a large number of the sites excavated in Harappan or Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga regions could be more appropriately renamed as Vedic Mahabharat sites, as these were located in the kingdoms mentioned in Mahabharat. The contents of this book prove with a fair amount of certainty that most of these archaeological settlements existed around five thousand years back and probably formed part of the kingdoms which participated in the Mahabharat war. In order to ensure that no injustice is done to our past, present and future generations by converting the history of our glorious past into mythology, there was a need that all proofs from multiple disciplines of science must be correlated with credibility and reliability with the text of Mahabharat. It was also necessary that this entire text, as well as information about the history and culture contained therein, is put in proper perspective, revealing its connection with Rigvedic and Ramayan eras.

A chronology of ancient Sanskrit texts was prepared, and gradually the methodology for determining exact dates of events narrated therein became clear. All astronomical references were sequentially extracted from Vedas and Epics. The corresponding sky views were generated using Planetarium and Stellarium softwares. Detailed evidence from archaeology and archaeobotany, geography and geology, oceanography and hydrology, remote sensing and genetic studies was gathered and after that was beautifully woven into the story. These support the astronomical date sequence. Beautiful pictures of sky simulations and of many excavated samples and artefacts are added to make the contents authentic as well as engaging. First of all, the book determining the astronomical dates of references recorded in Rigveda was authored under the title 'Historicity of Vedic and

Ramayan Eras', revealing that references in Rigveda pertain to 9000-8000 BP (Before Present). After that, under the guidance of the great scientist Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the book under the title 'Ramayan Retold with Scientific Evidences' was authored revealing that references in Valmiki Ramayan are scientifically relatable to 7000 BP. A comprehensive analysis and re-interpretation of Chaturyuga concept are given in Appendix 4 under the title 'Concept of Yugas Re-examined: Interpretations and Clarifications'.

The challenge of reading more than one lakh verses of Mahabharat, then determining the astronomical dates of planetary references contained therein and after that relating these with the supporting scientific evidence from seven disciplines of science was accepted about four years back. Sage Vyas had composed the entire story of Mahabharat and then recited it to his four disciples. After that, it was narrated by one of his disciples named Vaishampayan to Janamejaya, grandson of Abhimanyu and king of Kuru kingdom. The authentic primary texts used for writing this book are multiple volumes of Mahabharat published by Parimal Publications and by Gita Press Gorakhpur, which contain almost exactly similar verses, chapters and Parvas. This entire book titled 'Mahabharat Retold with Scientific Evidence' moves along with the original story of Mahabharat composed by Sage Vyas; scientific evidence of historicity and dates of various events mentioned therein are interwoven in the story. Every possible effort was made to ensure that the beauty of the original language is maintained, particularly of its similes and comparisons. The sequential steps taken are explained hereunder:

1. All verses of Mahabharat were studied carefully, and sequential sanctity was respected and maintained. All astronomical references were extracted sequentially, and translational disputes were resolved with the help of Sanskrit scholars. These details were entered using Planetarium Gold software to see the dates on which these positions could be observed in the sky from the latitudes and longitudes of stated places. Planetarium software is an application software which allows a user to simulate the day time and the night time sky on a computer. Screenshots of thirteen sequential sky views, covering a period of 52 years from 3153 BCE to 3101 BCE, were taken using Planetarium Gold Software. These exactly matched the descriptions of positions of stars and planets observed in the sky and recorded by the great Sage Vyas. In order to understand, appreciate, and enjoy these sky views, it is advised that the readers may go through the contents of Appendix 1 titled "Basic Concepts of Observational Astronomy" included in this book.

2. The Planetarium Gold software had been discontinued in 2008-2009 because there were some issues about the ephemeris, i.e. Gregorian Calendar adopted

by 'Planetarium Gold software'. Therefore, the screenshots of corresponding sky views were also taken, using Stellarium software (Version 0.19.1), which uses NASA JPL DE 431 ephemeris. All these 13 sky simulations described in Mahabharat were observed sequentially 26 days (+/-1 day) later during 3153 BCE to 3101 BCE. The difference of 26 days approximately is due to non-adjustment of 1 day for 131 years for pre-Gregorian reform period (3294/131=26) by Planetarium Gold software. In contrast, Stellarium takes into account this difference for the entire period. Let it be placed on record that exclusive sky views that were not observed on any other date during last 25000 years are two, one which displays locations of almost all the planets in the sky on 10th October 3139 BCE, a few days before the commencement of the war. The second one depicts the occurrence of the winter solstice on 14th January, 3138 BCE, Maagh Shukla Saptami, a day before Bhishma's Mahaprayan. All others automatically fell in sequence.

3. Thereafter, it was verified that these sky views are internally consistent, sequentially accurate and are not observed on any other dates during the last 25920 years. These sky views were not seen on any of the dates during the last 30000 years. These were certainly not observed in or around 5561 BCE (war year proposed by Shri Nilesh Oak), in 3067 BCE (proposed by Shri N Achar), 1792 BCE (war year calculated by Shri Ashok Bhatnagar) or in 1472 BCE (proposed by Shri Iyengar). All these four scholars have attempted astronomical dating of events narrated in Mahabharat. To verify the veracity of this assertion, readers may refer to Appendix 2 in this book titled 'Critical analysis of Astronomical dates of Mahabharat determined by other scientists and scholars'.

4. These astronomical dates of important events, determined using the latest planetarium softwares were presented before eminent astronomers and scientists during five seminars and workshops organized as director of I-SERVE, Delhi Chapter from 2011 to 2016. During these seminars, the participating scientists offered criticisms and suggestions on such astronomical dates of Mahabharat. After giving an earnest consideration, the relevant verses of Mahabharat were re-examined with reference to the sky simulations generated by us so that there were no inaccuracies. Resultantly, we had to discard our research work twice, once when the astronomer of I-SERVE fixed the dates of war in 3067 BCE during the Seminar in 2011, and again when these were fixed in 1792 BCE during Seminar in 2014. **The real hard work started thereafter; more accurate translations of Mahabharat verses were done, and corresponding sky simulations were generated afresh. These gave the year**

of the war as 3139 BCE. These were presented during the next Conference held in July 2016 on the subject 'Chronology of Indian Culture since the beginning of Holocene through Scientific Evidences'.

5. The conclusions presented by us were generally accepted by most of those eminent scientists and scholars who attended the Conference. Only thereafter it was decided to include these sky simulations in this book as the most reliable evidence of dates of events preceding and succeeding Mahabharat war. It may be clarified that these are astronomical dates whereas for determining corresponding historical dates we just have to add '1' to the year displayed by the software because computers do not provide for the zero years. A chart giving astronomical dates as well as historical dates has been included as Appendix 3 in this book under the title 'List of Astronomical and Historical Dates of Events narrated in Mahabharat'.

6. Once the astronomical dates of events leading to Mahabharat war, of occurrence of winter solstice a day before the Mahaprayan of Bhishma, and date of the solar eclipse before the destruction of Dwarka were determined, then the exercise of searching for other supporting archaeological and other scientific evidence was started. References to water tanks and warehouses, chariots and horses, swastika and Shivalinga, weapons and metallurgy, beads and ornaments, trees and crops, grains and herbs etc. were extracted from the Mahabharat text. These were compared with the samples and artefacts excavated from sites located in the territories of kingdoms mentioned in Mahabharat. Books, articles, and papers authored by eminent archaeologists were studied and compared. **A delightful and most definite conclusion was arrived at: that most of the Harappan sites belonging to the period of Town Economy (3500 BCE to 2600 BCE) formed part of Mahabharat kingdoms.** Comprehensive details have been included in this book in chapter 47, which has been edited by the eminent archaeologist, Dr R S Bisht (Padma Shri). Thus extensive archaeological evidence has supported the astronomical dates of Mahabharat war, placing it in 3139 BCE.

7. Sage Vyas had a comprehensive knowledge of the geography of Indian sub-continent. He has given minute details of places along with their north, south, east and west directions; mentioning the names of rivers flowing nearby. While doing so, he covered almost entire India, from Gandhar in North to Dravida in South, from Sindhu-Sauvira in the West to Pragjyotishapur in the East. In Udyog Parva and Bhishma Parva, geographic locations of most of the kingdoms, which participated in the war on behalf of Kauravas or Pandavas, are described.

These have been given along with the route followed by many of them to reach Kurukshetra. For these details, reference may be made to chapters 47 and 48 of this book.

8. For verifying the accuracy of astronomical dates of Mahabharat war, it was considered very important to extract names of trees and plants, crops and herbs from Mahabharat and then ascertain from paleobotanical pieces of evidence if these existed in India 5000 years back. The names of plants mentioned in Mahabharat, particularly in Adi Parva, Sabha Parva, Vana Parva, Shalya Parva, and Anushasana Parva, were extracted and listed. These details were also made available to Dr Premendra Priyadarshi, an eminent geneticist and paleobotanist (author of 'In Quest of the Dates of Vedas'). He was kind enough to provide paleobotanic details and evidence of these plants. Banana (Kadali) referred to in Mahabharat came to north India only around 3300 BCE; therefore, Mahabharat dates could not be before 3300 BCE. Again sesame is repeatedly mentioned in Mahabharat, and the oldest record of sesame found in the Indus-Sarasvati region has been dated back to 3500 BCE; thus placing Mahabharat sometime after that. Sal trees were found in Northern India in 3500 BC, Jackfruit and Jamun trees date back to 4000 BC; archaeobotanical evidence, therefore, supports the astronomical dates of Mahabharat.

It took more than three years to go through the lengthy text of Mahabharat and correlating supporting scientific evidence. Finally, the actual shape of this book got created, revealing that the Mahabharat war was actually fought around 3139 BCE and Shri Krishna had ensured the victory of dharma over adharma and of noble people over the ignoble during that war. In him, people saw the fruition of the Indian concept of transformation of man into a god or say *Nar se Narayan*; therefore, they started worshipping him as a god. After all, there is only one God and many gods; an extraordinary human being who saves noble people from the atrocities of the ignoble and establishes the rule of dharma and righteousness wins many admirers. After a few hundred years these admirers make a place for followers. Subsequently, after a few thousand years, followers make a place for the devotees. These devotees start attributing miracles to their heroes, who are by then accepted as gods by the vast majority of people. Normally it is at this stage that the construction of temples etc. is got done by the devotees.

If we read and evaluate events narrated in Mahabharat with our modern beliefs, then we would neither be able to put these in proper perspective nor would we be able to assess the motives and actions of different characters. Some of the facts which need to be kept in mind while reading the story are –

- There was a deep faith in the concept of rebirth. The feeling of revenge used to be very predominant and would be carried forward even to the next birth. More than twenty kingdoms fought on behalf of Kauravas because the king wanted to take some revenge from one or more of Pandavas. Amba reborn as Shikhandin killed Bhishma in order to take revenge for her mistreatment in a previous birth. Dhrishtadhyumna was born to kill Dronacharya because his father King Drupad had to take revenge from him.
- There was a strong belief in boons and curses. Lots of efforts were made to escape the harmful effects of curses pronounced by Sages and Brahmans. Karna was afflicted by and worried about many such curses. Even Lord Krishna and his Dwarka had to suffer the consequences of Gandhari's curse.
- The institution of marriage had not fully stabilized. The prevailing belief was that a Kshatriya could either win the hand of a girl in swayamvar or abduct her, to marry later-on with her consent. That is how Bhishma abducted all the three princesses of Kashi and wanted to get them married to his younger brother Vichitravirya; even Arjun abducted Krishna's sister Subhadra and thereafter married her.
- It was usual for men, particularly those from the warrior class, to have multiple marriages, and their first wife accepted the new brides with a sense of acceptability and warmth. A female could also have more than one husband. All five Pandava brothers had wives other than Draupadi. Draupadi enjoyed great respect in society because she accepted all of them with grace and dignity.
- There was a belief in life after death and that the fruits of one's good or bad karma may be reaped in one's next birth. It was widely believed that a Kshatriya who died in a battle goes to heaven. If he happened to die in Kurukshetra, then he would surely attain the highest paradise, even if he fought on behalf of immorality and adharma. This was probably the reason that most of the kings from all over India came to Kurukshetra to participate in Mahabharat war.
- Fighting war in support of dharma, righteousness, justice was not as important as was the custom to accept the first request for support and personal loyalty or relationship etc. That was the reason that wicked Duryodhana won the support of eleven Akshauhini of forces whereas noble Yudhishthir could get support from only seven Akshauhini. Shri Krishna had to provide assistance of his forces to Duryodhana while he himself became the charioteer of Arjun.
- There was longevity, and the average age of humans was about 90 years. In many cases, three generations of one family were fighting during Mahabharat

war, e.g. king Balhika, his son Somadatta and grandson Bhurishrava; king Dhritarashtra, his son Duryodhana and Duryodhana's son Laxman. Two generations were simultaneously fighting during the war in almost every case. All Pandava and Kaurava brothers, kings of Drupad and Matsya were all fighting duly assisted by their sons.

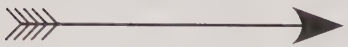
- The females were much respected, and most of them were named after their kingdoms or after their fathers, e.g. Kunti, daughter of king Kuntibhoj, Draupadi, daughter of King Drupad and Gandhari, daughter of the king of Gandhar. The entire kingdom fought for the protection of honour and rights of its daughters.
- Most of the weapons, mainly bows and arrows, were made of wood with arrowheads of copper, flint, bone, horn, or other metals. That is why many multiple arrows were shot as typically one arrow could not prove fatal. The iron had probably just been invented, and minimal weapons were made out of it. There is a reference to iron mace possessed by Bhima and iron arrow hitting Lord Krishna.
- Royals married amongst the royals; most of the kings and princes who participated in Mahabharat war were related through some matrimonial alliances. For example, Drupad, father of Draupadi and Kuntibhoj, father of Kunti fought on behalf of Pandavas, whereas kings and princes of Gandhara, Balhika and Kalinga fought in support of Kauravas.
- There were some rules accepted by society for the ethical conduct of war during the Mahabharat era. Still, when it became a matter of life or death or victory and defeat, then these rules were violated by almost everyone. The exciting part is that they would all violate these rules but blame only the opponent.
- Withdrawing from the war on being seriously hurt, or on charioteer getting killed, or on a chariot being broken, was an accepted routine matter and most of the warriors did withdraw from war for such reasons and reappeared later-on after getting equipped with weapons and vehicles etc. appropriately.

After going through this book, the readers would probably conclude that it portrays the astuteness of Lord Krishna, the prowess of Arjun, the wisdom of Vidur, virtues of Gandhari, the sagacity of Draupadi, and constancy of Kunti in a very articulate and engaging manner. Through detailed accounts, it brings out the goodness of Pandavas vis-à-vis the wickedness of Kauravas. It reveals the strength of character of Draupadi and truthfulness of Yudhishthir. It illustrates how the hypocrisy of Dhritarashtra and obsession of Bhishma with his celibacy pledge,

throwing away to winds all other ethics and moral values, could spell the ruin of such a great ancient royal dynasty named Bharatas!

With these introductory words, the book is placed before the readers. If after going through this book, readers start believing that the Mahabharat war was probably fought in 3139 BCE that would be somewhat satisfying. If after looking at the sky simulations, and the supporting archaeological & geographical evidence, the readers start believing in the historicity and dates of Mahabharat war described in this book, then the author would have a real sense of satisfaction. If a large number of readers start believing that Mahabharat, including Bhagavad Gita, represent our true historical and cultural heritage that is more than 5000 years old, then the objective of writing this book would stand fully accomplished.

CHAPTER 1



Ancient Kuru Dynasty

Mahabharat and Ramayan are the two gems of ancient Sanskrit literature which have survived the trials and tribulations of ever-changing times in India. Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas composed Mahabharat, the greatest and the longest poem of the world. He was the son of Sage Prashar and Satyavati. He was called Krishna because of his dark complexion and Dvaipayan because he was born on a Dvipa, i.e. an island in the Yamuna. Vyas was the name given to him. He composed Mahabharat during the lifetime of Pandavas when Yudhishthir was ruling as the king of Hastinapur after the Mahabharat war (Ref: Parimal Publications & Gita Press, Adi Parva: 1/1/94-98). However, the epic story did not get revealed to the world until Janamejaya, great-grandson of Arjun, earnestly requested him to get the entire story recited during his great Snake Sacrifice yajna.

Sage Vyas had narrated the story to his four disciples, including Vaishampayan. With permission from Sage Vyas, Vaishampayan recited the Epic poem to Janamejaya, s/o Kuru King Parikshit, other Brahmans and courtiers during Snake Sacrifice and thus passed it on to the world of men. Besides being a literary work of enormous significance, Mahabharat is an encyclopedia of that era, which contains the details of kingdoms and pilgrimages, rivers and forests, warriors and sages, morals and beliefs, laws and ethics, customs and social practices, philosophy and religion, methods and modes of living, social and spiritual aspirations etc. It is the story of Kauravas and Pandavas who hailed from the great ancient Bharata dynasty. It describes the astuteness of Lord Krishna, the prowess of Arjun, the

wisdom of Vidur, virtues of Gandhari and constancy of Kunti. Through detailed accounts, it brings out the goodness of Pandavas vis-à-vis the wickedness of Kauravas. It reveals the strength of character of Draupadi and truthfulness of Yudhishthir. It combines in itself Dharma Shastra, Niti Shastra, Artha Shastra, and Moksh Shastra.

After King Janamejaya had initiated the Snake-sacrifice, Sage Vyas arrived there on receipt of a very special invitation from King Janamejaya. The king washed his feet, worshipped him, and then offered a golden seat (Mahabharat by Parimal Publications & by Gita Press, Adi Parva: 1/60). King Janamejaya then requested Sage Vyas to narrate all the details of the war between Kauravas and Pandavas as he was an eye witness to all those events. At that time, Sage Vyas directed his disciple Vaishampayan to narrate the entire history of the war between Kauravas and Pandavas in detail as had been related to him by the Great Sage. After worshipping with reverence and devotion his preceptor Sage Vyas, Vaishampayan recited the story of Mahabharat in detail. He divided the story into eighteen Parvas–

List of the 18 Parvas of Mahabharat and a very brief overview of their contents-

Parva	Title	Chapters	Contents
1	Adi Parva *(The Book of the early days of Kauravas and Pandavas)*	1–234	How the story of Mahābhārat came to be narrated at the Snake sacrifice (*sarpayajna)* of Janamejaya by Vaishampayana at *Takṣhaśhilā?* The history and genealogy of the Bharatas are recalled. There are comprehensive details of the birth and early life of Kuru and Pandu princes
2	Sabha Parva (The Book of the Assembly Hall at Indraprastha)	1–81	Pandavas were given Khandavprastha as half share of Kuru kingdom. Maya Danava erected the palace and the court at Indraprastha. It contains details of life in Indraprastha, Yudhishthir's Rajasuya Yajna, Duryodhana's jealousy, the game of dice, the disrobing of Draupadi and eventual exile of the Pandavas
3	Vana Parva, *also* known as Aranya Parva (The Book of the Forest)	1-315	There are details of the twelve years of exile in the forest (*Aranya*), along with details of the acquisition of divine weapons by Arjun. Duryodhana was got saved by Yudhishthir from the clutches of Gandharvas

Parva	Title	Chapters	Contents
4	Virat Parva (The Book of incognito living in Matsyadesh for one year)	1-72	Contains the details of the year spent incognito at the court of King Virat in Matsyadesh by five Pandava brothers and Draupadi; the defeat of the vast army of Kuru forces by Arjun, assisted by Virat prince Uttar.
5	Udyog Parva (The Book of the Efforts)	1-198	Details of preparations for war and efforts to bring about peace between the Kaurava and the Pandava sides, which eventually failed. It also contains details of kingdoms which sided with Kauravas and Pandavas along with their geographic locations.
6	Bhishma Parva (The Book of Bhishma)	1-124	The first part of the great battle, with Bhishma as commander-in-chief for the Kaurava forces. Shri Krishna persuaded Arjun to discharge his duties as Kshatriya through his great sermon of Bhagavad Gita. Sage Vyas described various inauspicious planetary positions before the most destructive war. Bhishma's fall on the bed of arrows is described in detail.
7	Drona Parva (The Book of Drona waging war as the chief commander)	1-203	The war rages, with Drona as the Supreme Commander of Kuru forces. After killing of Jayadratha by Arjun, Drona waged a day-and-night battle. Most of the great warriors on both sides were dead by the time Dhrishtadhyumna killed Drona.
8	Karna Parva (The Book of Karna)	1-96	The continuation of the battle with Karna as commander-in-chief of the Kaurava forces. Wheels of Karna's chariot got stuck in the mud, and Arjun killed him with Anjalika weapon.
9	Shalya Parva (The Book of Shalya)	1-65	The last day of the battle, with Shalya as the Supreme Commander of Kurus. Also told in detail, is the pilgrimage of Balaram to the sacred places along the River Sarasvati with more information about the plants seen at that time. Finally, the mace-fight between Bhima and Duryodhana put an end to the war.

Parva	Title	Chapters	Contents
10	Sauptika Parva (The Book of the Sleeping Warriors)	1-17	Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman killed the remaining Pandava army treacherously in their sleep. Only seven warriors escaped alive on the Pandava side and three on the Kaurava side.
11	Stri Parva (The Book of the Women)	1–27	Gandhari and the other women (*stri*) of the Kauravas and Pandavas lament their dead husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. Gandhari cursed Krishna for the massive destruction and the extermination of the Kaurava.
12	Shanti Parva (The Book of Peace)	1-365	The crowning of Yudhishthir as king of Hastinapura, and instructions from Bhishma for the newly anointed king on society, economics, and politics. This is the longest book of the Mahabharat.
13	Anushasana Parva (The Book of the Instructions)	1-168	The final instructions to Yudhishthir from Bhishma about the duties of a king. Bhishma's departure for his heavenly abode just after the beginning of Northward movement of the Sun.
14	Ashvamedhika Parva (The Book of the Horse Sacrifice) [34]	1-92	The royal ceremony of the Ashwamedha (Horse sacrifice) conducted by Yudhishthir and the conquest of the world by Arjun, while protecting the horse.
15	Ashramavasika Parva (The Book of the Hermitage)	1-39	Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti go to the forest to live as ascetics; they got killed in the fire when they were living in a hermitage in the Himalayas. Vidura predeceased them.
16	Mausala Parva (The Book of the Clubs)	1-8	Gandhari's curse proves true. After 36 years of war, the infighting between the Yadava clans with maces leads to the destruction of the Yadavas. After the solar eclipse observed from Dwarka, Balaram and Krishna departed for Saket Dham, and Dwarka submerged.

Parva	Title	Chapters	Contents
17	Mahaprasthanika Parva (The Book of the Great Journey)	1-3	The great journey of Yudhishthir, his brothers and his wife Draupadi across the whole country and finally their ascent of the great Himalayas where each Pandava falls except for Yudhishthir.
18	Svargarohana Parva (The Book of ascent to Heaven)	1-6	Yudhishthir's final test and the return of the Pandavas to the spiritual world (*svarga*).

Vaishampayan started the story with the narration of genealogy of great Bharata race to which Janamejaya belonged. He traced the ancestry to great King Yayati, whose four brilliant and mighty sons included Yadu and Puru. The successors of Yadu were Chandravanshi (Yaduvanshi) kings, who ruled over the earth for thousands of years. Vasudeva Krishna was the most prominent king of this lineage and was also the most revered personality during the Mahabharat era. The successors of Puru became the forefathers of several dynasties, which included the Kuru dynasty and Panchal dynasty. Kauravas and Pandavas belonged to the Kuru lineage, starting with Puru.

The 18th descendant of King Puru was the most well known and powerful king Dushyant. His son was the most eminent king of Bharatvarsh, and his name was Bharat. His descendants were known as Bharatvanshi rulers. The 25th descendant of Emperor Puru was Emperor Ajamidh. Ajamidh had three sons – Brihdishu, Neil and Riksha. The descendants of Riksh were Kuruvanshi rulers, whose ancestry is thus traced to Bharatvanshi rulers as well. King Kuru was the grandson of King Riksha, and King Shantanu was his 17th eminent descendant.

Emperor Shantanu had three sons – Bhishma, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Dhritarashtra, Pandu, and Vidur were born in the lineage of Vichitravirya. Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons, including Duryodhana and Dushasana. They were all killed in the battle of Mahabharat. Five sons of Pandu - Yudhishthir, Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahdev - ruled for 36 years after their victory in Mahabharat war. After that, they installed Abhimanyu's son Parikshit on the throne of Hastinapur and went for *Swarga-arohan* (journey to Heaven). Janamejaya became the king after Parikshit. He thought of organizing Snake Sacrifice because a snake bite had killed his father, Parikshit. Complete genealogy chart of this dynasty is given in Appendix 5.

Since Janamejaya was keen on knowing in detail about his ancestors and about the important events which took place before Mahabharat war, Vaishampayan narrated the story of the great ancestor of Kuru Dynasty – the tale of Dushyant and Shakuntala, immortalized by Poet Kalidas in his timeless classic *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*. King Dushyant, who ruled over a very vast kingdom from Hastinapur, was very fond of hunting. One day while chasing a deer, he reached outside the hermitage of sage Kanva. He called out as he wanted to pay his respects to the Sage. Sage Kanva's foster daughter, named Shakuntala, responded. She was magnificent. Mesmerized by her stunning beauty and civilized behaviour, the King proposed to marry her when Sage Kanva had still not arrived in the cottage. They married in Gandharva way, and Shakuntala extracted a promise from Emperor Dushyant that a son born out of their union would be installed on the throne of Hastinapur. After marrying Shakuntala, the king went back to his palace in Hastinapur (located in modern-day Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh).

After the departure of King Dushyant, Sage Kanva came back to the hermitage and Shakuntala narrated the entire sequence of events. He approved of her Gandharva marriage with the Emperor. After a few months, Shakuntala gave birth to a son, who was named Bharat. This boy had divine charm around him and was endued with beauty, bravery, and magnanimity. When the boy grew six years old, he became so powerful that he could seize tigers and bind elephants to the trees. Seeing his capacity to subjugate all beasts and enemies, Sage Kanva renamed him as Sarvadaman Bharat. After that, Sage Kanva sent some of his disciples to escort Shakuntala along with the young prince to King Dushyant's palace.

Shakuntala narrated the entire sequence of events leading to their Gandharva style wedding and subsequent birth of a son. However, King Dushyant refused to recognize her as his wife and Bharat as their son. Shakuntala did not start crying but faced the situation boldly. She invoked the principle of truth saying, "Better than a hundred yajnas is one son, and better than a hundred sons is unwavering faith in the truth". She looked into the eyes of the king and said that he knew the truth but had chosen to tell a lie. However, the king refused to budge, and Shakuntala decided to go back. Just at that time, a divine voice announced, "Do not disrespect Shakuntala because she is telling the truth. She is your duly wedded wife, and Sarvdaman Bharat is your son". King Dushyant accepted the divine affirmation and accepted Shakuntala as his wife and Bharat as their son. The king thereafter apologized saying that he was afraid of public censor as his subjects did not know about their marriage and he wanted a public affirmation so that their son could legitimately succeed him. Both Dushyant and Bharat ruled for many years in the best interest of their subjects.

Janamejaya requested Vaishampayan to tell some more stories about the ancestors of Kuru dynasty. Vaishampayan then narrated the story of Shantanu,

who was the 26th successor of King Dushyant and 16th successor of King Kuru. Shantanu was the son of Sage King Pratipa, and he was given the name Shantanu because he was born when his father had controlled his passions through asceticism. Shantanu was a great and noble king. One day, King Shantanu met a lovely damsel of blazing beauty on the banks of River Ganga; his senses got intoxicated with attraction. The King proposed to her and offered his wealth, kingdom and everything in return. The beautiful maiden Ganga replied that she was willing to become Shantanu's wife, but on one condition that the King would never interfere in any of her acts nor would he ever question her deeds, whether he agreed with them of not.

King Shantanu accepted the pre-condition, and they both got married. They lived happily for many years as husband and wife. Seven sons were born to the King through Ganga, but she cast them all one by one into the river Ganga. King Shantanu was horrified and anguished at such cruel conduct but suffered in silence because of the promise he had made. When the eighth son was born, and Ganga was going to throw him into the river, the king wanted to save the child and enquired in sorrow from Ganga, who was she and why she was bent upon killing her sons. The King's wife replied that she was an incarnation of goddess Ganga and she had assumed the human form and married the king to fulfil the promise of freeing divine Vasus from their human birth as a consequence of the curse of Sage Vashishth. It is for this reason that she had thrown seven Vasus one by one into Ganga waters immediately after their birth. She also added that their 8th child would have to live on earth for long years. Saying this Ganga disappeared along with her eighth child. Heartbroken and sorrowful King Shantanu came back to his palace in Hastinapur.

King Shantanu was blessed with many accomplishments like self-control, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and asceticism. He ruled for many years as a protector and benefactor of his subjects. One day when the king was walking along the River Ganges, he saw a handsome, brave boy trying to cast a dam of arrows across the flooded River Ganges. As the king stood transfixed with amazement, the goddess Ganga revealed herself and introduced the child as his son; their eighth child she had taken along. She then said that his name was Devavrata; he had mastered the art of warfare, was well versed in Vedas and was well-versed in all arts and sciences. She then asked the king to take back the child with him. Then Ganga blessed the child, handed him over to his father and disappeared after that. The King was filled with joy; he took Devavrata with him and crowned him as the Prince Regent.

CHAPTER 2

Abdication of throne and oath of celibacy by Devavrata

Four years went past when the king Shantanu was walking along River Yamuna one day. The air was suddenly filled with the divine fragrance, and the king traced it to an extremely beautiful fisherwoman. The king wanted her to be his wife, but fisherwoman's father set a pre-condition that she would marry him only if a son born to her would be installed on the throne. The king was unable to fulfil that wish because Devavrata, of unmatched wisdom and prowess had already been declared the heir-apparent to the throne. However, the king had gone mad with passion and started looking very sad and melancholy. Then, one day, Devavrata enquired about the reason for his secret sorrow. The king, while feeling ashamed to tell the whole story to his son, revealed the half-truth saying that Devavrata was his only son and that if something happened to him, the kingdom would be left without an heir. Therefore the king desired to marry again so that the dynasty is perpetuated.

Devavrata then sensed that there was something more to the story and he enquired about the cause of his father's sorrow from his charioteer, who narrated the entire sequence of events about meeting the fisherwoman in detail. Devavrata immediately went to the chief of fishermen and asked for his daughter's hand on behalf of his father. The fisherman replied that his daughter was fit enough to be the spouse of a king, but the pre-condition is that only her son should become the

king. Devavrata promised that only her son would become the king and that he was renouncing his right as heir-apparent in favour of her son. The father of that fisherwoman was still not fully satisfied; he expressed the doubt that even if Devavrata kept his promise, his children in future might not be willing to renounce their birthright to the throne. Devavrata, however, was bent upon fulfilling his father's desire. He then raised his arms and took the vow of Brahmacharya (celibacy) for his entire life. For making such a Bhishma pledge, Devavrata was known as Bhishma after that. The name of this beautiful fisherwoman was Satyavati; with the consent of her father, Devavrata brought her to his father. The king Shantanu got formally married and installed Satyavati in his household.

एवमेतत करिष्यामि यथा त्वमनुभाषसे।
योअस्यां जनिष्यते पुत्रः स नो राजा भविष्यति।। (1/100/87)
अद्यप्रभृति मे दाश ब्रह्मचर्यं भविष्यति।
अपुत्रस्यापि मे लोका भविष्यन्त्यक्षया दिवि।। (1/100/96)

1/100/87, Meaning: Devavrata at that time said that he would do what the father of Satyavati desired. The son that would be born of this lady (Satyavati) will be the King.

1/100/96, Meaning: Bhishma took a vow before Satyavati's father and other fishermen that he would live as a *Brahmachari* (celibate) all his life. Even though he would die sonless, he would still achieve the highest heavens.

Vaishampayan chose to narrate this story in detail because most of the subsequent events, leading right up to Mahabharat war, were rooted in this event. Many unethical acts of omission and commission were attributable to this Bhishma pledge taken by Devavrata to please his father at that time.

In due course of time, powerful king Shantanu begot on his wife Satyavati, a brave son named Chitrangada. Then Satyavati gave birth to another son named Vichitravirya. When the two sons were still minors, Shantanu left for his heavenly abode. Bhishma was always obedient to his stepmother Satyavati. He installed Chitrangada on the throne. Chitrangada was very brave, and he defeated many kings. He fought with a powerful Gandharva chief for three long years on the banks of river Sarasvati, but finally, he got killed. Subsequently Vichitravirya, still a minor, was installed on the throne and he ruled under the guidance of Devavrata alias Bhishma.

When Vichitravirya attained majority, Satyavati and Bhishma were looking for a suitable bride for him. Then they heard that three beautiful daughters of King of Kashi (modern Varanasi of UP) would be getting married in a *swayamvar*.

Then with the permission of mother Satyavati, Bhishma went to Varanasi (Kashi) in his chariot. By now, he had already started looking old; therefore, the three gorgeous looking royal daughters felt upset. The kings assembled there started whispering to each other that this old man Bhishma had probably forgotten about the pledge of celibacy taken by him. Feeling angry, Bhishma got up and talked about different kinds of marriage, like wives may be received as presents, marriage may be solemnized with the consent of the girl or by making use of force. He then added that sages have also permitted marriage when during swayamvar, the bride is taken away by force after defeating all the kings. Bhishma thundered that he is carrying away, forcefully and intentionally, all the three brides named Amba, Ambika and Ambalika to get them married to Vichitravirya. Feeling furious, kings got up and put on their armours. A ferocious fight followed, and both sides shot thousands of arrows. However, none could stand in front of Bhishma. Powerful King Shalva was genuinely interested in getting married to Amba, and he gave a tough fight to Bhishma. Still, finally, Bhishma killed the horses of king Shalva's chariot, defeated him but let him escape.

After defeating all the kings, Bhishma took all the three beautiful maidens to Hastinapur and crossed several rivers, forests and hills on the way. Bhishma treated those three accomplished maidens with extreme tenderness as if they were his daughters and then presented them to his brother Vichitravirya. Preparations for marrying them to the Kuru king Vichitravirya were in progress when Amba told Bhishma that she had already chosen King Shalva as her husband and he had also accepted her as his wife. She then asked if it would be proper to marry her to another man forcibly? Bhishma then sent Amba to King Shalva with an escort and in a dazzling ceremony, he got Ambika and Ambalika married to Vichitravirya.

Handsome Vichitravirya and his two beautiful wives developed a bond of love and respect for each other, and they lived happily for seven years (1/102/66). Then suddenly, overtaken by disease, Vichitravirya died. Satyavati, Bhishma, Ambika, and Ambalika all plunged in anxiety and grief. They performed the obsequies of Vichitravirya. However, they all were anxious about the future of Kuru dynasty as the kingdom was now without any heir. After some time, Satyavati beseeched Bhishma to beget sons by uniting with Ambika and Ambalika. Alternatively, she requested that Bhishma should install himself on the throne, get married and continue the line of Kuru dynasty. Bhishma, however, refused to accept any of the two suggestions, reminding Satyavati about the pledge taken by him at the time of her marriage with King Shantanu. On being further persuaded by Satyavati, Bhishma replied that water might renounce its moisture and Sun may renounce its heat, but Bhishma would never break his pledge.

Amba, on the other hand, had gone happily to King Shalva and requested him to marry her according to Vedic rites. However, King Shalva refused to marry her and asked her to go back to Bhishma and follow his commands because he had defeated him during the encounter. Amba came back to Hastinapur, but Vichitravirya refused to marry her. Bhishma felt sorry for her, as he couldn't break his vow of celibacy. She approached several princes with the hope that one of them would kill or defeat Bhishma and then marry her, but none of them was willing to take this risk. The lotus-eyed Amba spent six bitter years in sorrow and distress, and she developed fierce hatred towards Bhishma. She then resorted to hard austerities and with the grace of Lord Subramanya; she got a garland of ever-fresh lotuses wearing which a person would turn inimical to Bhishma. None of the Kshatriyas was willing to wear that garland. She finally hung it outside the palace of King Drupada and went to the forests. The only objective of her life was to take revenge from Bhishma. Then one night, Lord Shiva appeared in her dream and said that in her next birth, she would kill Bhishma. Amba immediately lit a pyre and jumped into it. During her next birth, she was born as Shikhandin and became instrumental in killing Bhishma.

Reverting to the events in Hastinapur, Satyavati was desperate to get an off-spring for his deceased son through his widows. She then decided to share one of the most well-preserved secrets of her life with Bhishma. She told that once she was plying the boat with Sage Parashar to take him across the Yamuna. Intoxicated by the celestial beauty of Satyavati, Sage Parashar united with her after obtaining her consent. Out of this union, a son was born, who was named Vyas. Vyas was brought up by Sage Parashar, and he soon became famous for his profound wisdom and knowledge of Vedas. She expressed her desire to request Sage Vyas to get excellent off-spring through the wives of Vichitravirya. Bhishma Pitamah gave his consent, and Sage Vyas was invited. Satyavati was in tears on seeing her son after such a long time. Bowing to his mother, Sage Vyas offered to fulfil her wishes. Satyavati then explained that with the untimely demise of Vichitravirya, celestial beauties Ambika and Ambalika had been left childless and they are desirous of begetting sons. Just as Bhishma is Vichitravirya's brother from father's side, Vyas is his brother from mother's side. Therefore there would be no violation of virtue and ethics if Vyas begets sons through Ambika and Ambalika who would perpetuate the dynasty of Shantanu. Sage Vyas accepted the request.

Satyavati briefed both Ambika and Ambalika and asked them to bathe and be ready to receive their late husband's elder brother in their bedrooms. The sage first went to Ambika, who had started thinking that Bhishma would come to her. However, when she saw dark-complexioned ugly looking Sage Vyas, she closed

her eyes. Sage Vyas united with her, and she became pregnant. Later on, she gave birth to a son named Dhritrashtra, who was very brave and accomplished but was blind. After a while, Satyavati again called Sage Vyas and expressed the worry that a blind person cannot become the ruler as per the Shastras. Therefore, she wanted her eldest son Sage Vyas to unite with Ambalika in the hope of begetting another son. On seeing repulsive-looking Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas, Ambalika grew pale, and subsequently, she gave birth to a son named Pandu, who had a pale complexion.

Later Ambika was again in her season, Satyavati asked her to once again unite with Vyas to beget another son. Remembering the ugly face and strong odour of the great Sage, Ambika decked a maidservant like an apsara and sent her to Vyas. This maidservant waited upon the sage and took her seat near him when asked. Sage Vyas was delighted with her humility, and after uniting with her, he told her that she would no longer remain a maidservant and that her son would be most virtuous and intelligent. This son of Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas was named Vidur. Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas narrated the entire sequence of events to Satyavati and disappeared soon after that.

Three sons of Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas, begotten for his deceased brother Vichitravirya, were brought up in Kuru kingdom with great care, love, and affection. Bhishma ruled the kingdom, waiting for Dhritrashtra, Pandu, and Vidur to grow up under his fatherly affection. The Kuru kingdom was flourishing, and people were happy. The holy city of Hastinapur looked like heaven on earth. The princes were provided with the best of education and training. They became learned in Vedas, and experts in archery and horsemanship. Dhritrashtra especially excelled in personal strength whereas Pandu excelled in the science of archery. Vidur excelled in the knowledge of morality, virtue, and dharma.

Eventually, the three accomplished sons became adolescents. Even though Dhritrashtra was the eldest, but he was not coronated as the King as he was blind. Therefore, Pandu was installed on the throne of Hastinapur. This left a lot of bitterness in the mind of Dhritrashtra. Satyavati and Bhishma were very keen to get the three sons; namely, Dhritrashtra, Pandu, and Vidur married so that the Kuru dynasty does not become extinct. Bhishma had heard that Gandhari, the beautiful daughter of King Subala of Gandhar, had received a boon that she would be a mother of hundred sons. Therefore that grandsire of Kurus, Bhishma Pitamah sent the proposal for a marriage of Dhritrashtra with Gandhari. King Subala had some initial hesitation because the groom was blind but finally agreed to bestow the virtuous Gandhari on Dhritarashtra. On hearing about the blindness of her husband, Gandhari bandaged her own eyes with a cloth and her brother

Shakuni, escorted her to Hastinapur. She was then formally married to Dhritarashtra.

Bhishma Pitamah now learnt about Pritha, daughter of King Shura of Yadu dynasty, who was the grandfather of Shri Krishna. King Shura had given this firstborn child to childless paternal cousin King Kuntibhoj. Pritha was famous for her matchless beauty. Once, when she was assigned the duty to look-after Sage Durvasa, she pleased him with her care and attention. Sage Durvasa taught her a Mantra for invoking any of the celestials. Out of curiosity, Kunti invoked Sun god, and immediately she saw that effulgent deity Sun was offering his services to her. Kunti explained that she only wanted to test the efficacy of boon granted by Sage Durvasa. She wanted Sun god to go away, but the deity embraced her and out of this union was born a son named Karna, who had a natural armour and earrings at the time of birth. Feeling ashamed and afraid to reveal these facts to the world, with tears rolling down her eyes, Kunti threw her effulgent son into the water with a resolve to conceal this fact from the whole world. The illustrious husband of Radha, who was the son of a Suta named Adhirath, took the child home. Radha and her husband brought up Karna with great love and affection. He grew up very strong and became an expert in making use of weapons.

King Kuntibhoj organized a swayamvar so that Pritha, also known as Kunti, could choose a husband for her. Kunti got attracted by looks, physique, and prowess of Pandu while he was sitting amongst the kings. Advancing in modesty, she placed the nuptial garland around the neck of King Pandu. King Kuntibhoj formally solemnized her marriage with King Pandu and sent the bride and the groom with enormous wealth to Hastinapur. Sometime later, Bhishma Pitamah got the second wife for King Pandu. He was married to Madri, daughter of Shalya, King of Madra Desh. King Pandu enjoyed life with Kunti and Madri for some months.

Subsequently, King Pandu left Hastinapur with the ambition to conquer the whole world, with the permission of Bhishma, and Dhritrashtra. He took with him chaturangini forces, which included infantry, cavalry, elephantry, and chariot riders. King Pandu defeated Dasharanas, kings of Magadh and Mithila. He also defeated kings of Kashi and Pundra. Seeing all this, the kings of earth accepted and recognized him as their *Samrat*, i.e. the King of kings. They offered valuables as a tribute. Victorious Pandu returned to Hastinapur and subjects of Kuru kingdom were much delighted to welcome him back.

At the command of Dhritrashtra, Pandu offered the entire acquired wealth to Satyavati, Ambika and Ambalika. Pandu also sent a portion of this wealth to

Vidur and a part was used in organizing Ashwamedha yajnas followed by distribution of wealth in charity. Pandu enjoyed the pleasures of the expanded kingdom only for some days. He had already mastered his senses, and he desired to go and live in the forests. He left for living in the woods, accompanied by Kunti and Madri and lived on the picturesque southern slopes of Himalayas. A while later Bhishma came to know that King Devaka had a beautiful daughter, born from a Shudra wife. He got her married to high souled Vidur.

CHAPTER 3

Birth of Pandu and Kuru Princes; their training under Drona

After some time, Gandhari conceived by Dhritrashtra and remained pregnant for about two years without delivering any child. On the other hand, Kunti was also pregnant, and she gave birth to a brave and talented child, Yudhishthir. Gandhari felt upset, and she struck her womb with violence. Out came a hard mass of flesh; she decided to throw it away. Just at that time, Maharshi Vyas came there. He placed the mass of flesh in a big jar filled with ghee and sprinkled water on it. After some time, this mass of flesh was divided into one hundred and one parts. Each one of these parts was placed in a separate jar filled with ghee and extracts of herbs. After that, these 101 jars were kept in a concealed place, and Sage Vyas told Gandhari to open these only after two years. After two years when jars were opened, Duryodhana was born first of all, and after that, within one-month other ninety-nine sons and one daughter were born. On the day Duryodhana was born, Kunti gave birth to her second son named Bhima.

Just as Duryodhana was born, he brayed like an ass and simultaneously vultures, jackals and crows started crying loudly. The wise men, Brahmans, and Vidur assembled; they advised Dhritrashtra to abandon Duryodhana as he was born with highly inauspicious signs and was likely to be the reason for extermination of the Kuru dynasty. Dhritarashtra did not accept the suggestion out of affection for his eldest son. He, however, was upset thinking that his eldest son Duryodhana would not become the King being younger to Yudhishthir.

Let us now revert to the events relating to King Pandu and his wives Kunti and Madri. King Pandu was ruling over vast Kuru kingdom from Hastinapur. One day King Pandu was out hunting when a sage and his wife were also sporting in the guise of deer. Pandu shot at a deer with his sharp arrow. Wounded deer took the form of a sage and then cursed King Pandu saying that since he had shot an arrow when sage deer was having intercourse with his wife, this was a sinful act, the King would meet his end the moment he tried to have intercourse with his wife due to sexual desire. Heartbroken Pandu decided to retreat to the forest entrusting his kingdom to Bhishma Pitamah, Vidur, and Dhritrashtra. Both his virtuous wives Kunti and Madri accompanied him to the forest to live the life of ascetics. With a deep desire to have an offspring, Pandu suggested to Kunti to have an offspring by uniting with a virtuous Brahmin.

At this stage, Kunti confided in him the story of a Mantra which she had received from Sage Durvasa. Ascetic King Pandu requested Kunti to make use of the Mantra and suggested that she should invite and invoke Dharma raja. Kunti offered adorations to Dharma, reciting the Mantra given to her by Durvasa. The deity Dharma, overpowered by Mantra, came to Kunti and united with her in his pure form. Subsequently, Kunti gave birth to an excellent son, who was later-on known as Dharmaraj Yudhishthir. Sometime later Pandu beseeched Kunti to invoke Wind god and obtain a son of great strength. Kunti prayed to Vayu (wind god), and after bashfully uniting with the Wind god, she gave birth to a son, named Bhima, who was endued with great strength. Duryodhana was born on the same day on which Bhima was born (1/114/26-27).

Royal ascetic Pandu was still not satisfied and wanted Kunti to give him a son who is endued with immeasurable energy, prowess, and glory. Pandu asked Kunti to observe an auspicious vow for one full year, and he himself practised the severest asceticism. King Indra appeared in his dreams and said that he would bless him with an extraordinary son who would be the foremost of all. King Pandu then requested Kunti to worship Indra. Kunti invoked Mantra, god Indra appeared and united with Kunti, and she begot Arjun. A celestial voice at that time announced that Arjun would be as mighty as Parashuram and Vishnu and he would acquire divine weapons.

By this time all the hundred sons and one daughter of Dhritrashtra had already been born. Madri was quite upset and wanted to have her own son. She, therefore, requested royal hermit Pandu to ask Kunti to help her conceive. Pandu requested Kunti to help Madri to become a mother. Kunti gave the Mantra to Madri, who reflected upon pair of Ashvins. They came and begot her the twins as offspring, who were named Nakul and Sahadev. They both were extremely handsome and

virtuous. After looking at his five brave and worthy sons, Pandu felt thrilled and satisfied.

One day in the spring season when Arjun had just completed fourteen years; for celebrating his birthday, Mother Kunti got busy with serving the food to Brahmanas and sages (Gitapress, Adi Parva: 1/124/2). Feeling ecstatic and romantic, King Pandu went out with Madri and started roaming around in the forest which looked stunning with blossoms in the company of his beautiful wife. He was so obsessed with the desire that he forgot the curse of the sage and compelled by passion, he united with Madri. Immediately after that, he fell dead. Madri could not restrain her sorrow. Holding herself responsible for the death of the ascetic King, she burnt herself on the pyre of Pandu, entrusting her children to Kunti. Hundreds of ascetics and rishis of the forest took Kunti and her five sons to Hastinapur. Hearing the news, all the members of the Kuru royal family, accompanied by prominent citizens, came out to receive them.

Dhritrashtra commanded that Vidur and Bhishma should get performed all the funeral ceremonies of the great King Pandu. After completing these ceremonies, jalanjali (offering water to the departed soul) was also offered. Finally, Shradh ceremony was also conducted. Sage Vyas saw his mother Satyavati bereaved and greatly grief-stricken. He then warned her that happy days had gone and days of misery had begun. He also warned that due to the evil deeds of Kurus; the world would be destroyed. Therefore, he advised Satyavati to go to the forests and live the life of ascetics. After obtaining permission from Ambika (mother of Dhritrashtra) and taking Ambalika (the mother of Pandu) with her, Satyavati left for the forest. They both practised severe asceticism, and sometime later, they departed to heaven.

Five sons of Pandu were growing in royal style, and they enjoyed playing with the sons of Dhritrashtra. They excelled sons of Dhritrashtra in all sports and activities due to their superior strength and wisdom. Bhima was extremely powerful and prided himself in tormenting sons of Dhritrashtra by playing pranks. Duryodhana got highly jealous and hatched a wicked conspiracy to kill Bhima. He invited Pandavas to accompany Kuru sons to the banks of river Ganges so that they could all enjoy water sports. He planned that he would drown Bhima in his sleep and after that, would arrest Yudhishthir and Arjun so that he could rule over the vast Kuru kingdom unhindered.

They all went to enjoy water sports on the banks of River Ganga. Duryodhana mixed poison in the food given to Bhima. Having enjoyed to the fullest, they all got tired and went to rest in the Pleasure House. Under the influence of poison and extremely fatigued, Bhima slept on the ground on the river bank. Duryodhana tied

Bhima with various kinds of creepers and then pushed him into the river so that he would drown, Looking at unconscious Bhima sunk in the water, snakes began to bite Bhima. The snake poison neutralized the vegetable poison given to Bhima by Duryodhana, and he regained consciousness. The King of snakes gave vessels of Ambrosia, which contained the strength of a thousand elephants, to Bhima. Bhima drank eight vessels of Ambrosia and acquired the strength of a thousand elephants.

In the evening, it was time for Pandava and Kaurava princes to go back home. Yudhishthir and his brothers searched for Bhima all around but could not find him anywhere. Thinking that he might have gone home, they went straight to their mother Kunti and enquired about Bhima, who was untraceable. Kunti, Yudhishthir and his brothers searched for him everywhere but were doleful on not finding him anywhere. Vidur tried to console them. Then after a few days, Bhima came back home and narrated the entire story of Duryodhana's villainy and Naga's magnanimity. To ensure that Pandava brothers do not invite fiercer wrath of Duryodhana, Yudhishthir advised his brothers not to reveal the incident to anyone else and remain more vigilant and closer to each other. Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni (Gandhari's brother) were surprised how could Bhima survive such a virulent poison and, thereafter, made several attempts to kill him but all these went in vain. However, as advised by Vidur, Pandavas expressed no indignation at such attempts.

Bhishma Pitamah put the Kuru and Pandu princes under training with Sage Kripacharya. However, he was still in search of a teacher endowed with exceptional qualities and prowess to train them. At that time, Arjun was about 15 years old, Bhima and Duryodhana were in their 17th year whereas Yudhishthir was 19 years old. Nakul and Sahadev were just around 13-14 years old. In those days, Dronacharya had acquired great fame for his knowledge of Vedas and expertise in archery. He was the son of sage Bhardwaj and was married to Kripacharya's sister, and a son Ashwatthama was born to them. Drona was passionately attached to his wife and son; he wanted to acquire wealth for their sake. He went to his Gurukul friend King Drupada but was severely humiliated by him, saying that a pauper could not be a friend of a king. Disgraced in this manner, Drona was turned out of Drupad's palace, and he took a vow to punish the arrogant King. He came to stay with his brother-in-law Kripacharya for some days.

One day, Kuru and Pandu princes were playing with a ball; during the game, the ball along with Yudhishthir's ring fell into the well. The princes could see the two items shining bright in clear water but did not know how to take these out. Drona was watching all this and wondered why the princes of Bharata race could not take the two items out of the well. Yudhishthir challenged Dronacharya to take

the items out of the well. Drona quickly shot one arrow which got stuck into the ball. After that, he shot several arrows which formed a chain by clinging together and thus the ball was taken out. Then, Drona shot an arrow right into the ring. The arrow rebounded and brought up the ring. These amazing feats astonished the princes; they went straight to Bhishma and narrated the entire sequence of events. Bhishma knew that this Brahman was Dronacharya. He received him with special honour and requested him to impart further training to the princes.

The great bowman Drona imparted intensive training to the princes, teaching them various skills and tricks of archery as well as the use of other weapons. Many other princes including Vrishnis, Andhakas, Karna and Drona's son Ashwatthama also made Drona their preceptor. Guru Drona taught the Kuru and Pandu princes use of weapons, both human and celestial. He taught them how to fight with clubs, the sword, the lance, the spear and the dart. Although they were all imparted similar training, Drona grew particularly fond of Arjun because of his skill, eagerness to learn and to obey the commands of his Guru. Guru Drona grew so fond of Falguni (Arjuna) that he announced that at the end of the training, there would be no bowman in the world who could be his equal.

Duryodhana and Bhima became experts in club fight but grew extremely jealous of each other. Nakul and Sahadev excelled in handling the sword. Yudhishthir became the best of car-warriors (Maharathi). However, Arjun surpassed them all in intelligence and skill, devotion to his arms and his preceptor, and in fighting with his bow and arrow thousands of people at one time. One day Guru Drona tested his disciples, asking them to severe the head of an eagle sitting on the tree. Only Arjun passed the test. Arjun, while aiming, had declared that he could only see the head of the bird and Guru was pleased with his concentration and commitment. Then one day, when Drona was bathing, an alligator seized him at the thigh. He asked his pupils to kill the alligator without losing any time. While others were still contemplating about the response, Arjun (also known as Bibhatsu and Parth) struck the alligator with sharp irresistible arrows and cut it into pieces. Extremely pleased with Arjun, Drona gave him a potent and superior weapon called Brahmashira.

As soon as the training completed, Drona went to Dhritrashtra and told him that the princes were ready to display their skills and proficiency. King asked Vidur to make all arrangements for the big event. A stadium was built quickly, in which thousands of people could be seated. The princes, King and his ministers and the ladies of the royal household came in their best dresses to the stadium. Guru Drona dressed in white, accompanied by his son Ashwatthama, entered the arena and behind him entered the Kuru and Pandu Princes. Vidur described all the

feats of princes to Dhritrashtra, whereas Kunti described these to Gandhari. The club fight between Duryodhana and Bhima became so furious and ferocious that Drona stopped it. Thereafter, with great pride, Guru Dronacharya invited the audience to see the superhuman feats of Arjun. He created fire by the Agneya weapon and then created water by the Varuna weapon. During this tournament, Arjun created winds by Vayavya weapon and created the clouds by using Parjanya weapon. The spectators were thrilled as well as bewildered.

Just when the tournament had almost ended, and excitement of the spectators cooled down, Karna entered the spacious arena and threw an open challenge that he could beat Arjun in performing all those feats. Arjun was getting ready to face the challenge. Duryodhana and his brothers extended a hearty welcome to Karna, who was always jealous of Arjun and fond of Duryodhana. When the two heroes were ready with their powerful bows raised, Guru Kripacharya intervened and wanted to know the lineage and parentage of Karna as the sons of Kings could duel only with persons of royal lineage. Duryodhana at that time got up and announced that if the combat were to take place only between two kings or princes, then Karna is crowned as the King of Anga (probably located somewhere in Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh) with immediate effect.

After that, Adhiratha, the charioteer and father of Karna, entered the arena to bless his son. Realizing that Karna was the son of a charioteer, Bhishma Pitamah said some rude and insulting words to him. Duryodhana was furious, and he said that secrets behind the birth of humans could be very intriguing and that brave Karna with all the auspicious marks and looking effulgent like the Sun deserved to have sovereignty not only over Anga but over the whole world. Slowly the Sun had gone below the horizon and tournament came to an end. The spectators went back; some were praising Arjun, others were admiring Duryodhana, and many others were appreciating Karna's courage.

CHAPTER 4

Drona took revenge from King Drupada through the valour of Arjun

It would have taken around 4-5 years for Dronacharya to impart comprehensive training to Kuru and Pandu princes. Seeing the Kuru and Pandu princes well trained in the use of weapons, Guru Drona decided to ask for his Dakshina (remuneration). Then he asked all his pupils to seize Drupada, the king of Panchal and produce him before the preceptor. Accompanied by his brothers and Karna, Duryodhana went and attacked Drupada. They caused massive loss to his army but were finally defeated by the king of Panchal. Thus humiliated, they came back. After that, Bhima and Arjun went to accomplish the task. Entering into the mighty army of the king of Panchal holding his club, Bhima roared like an ocean during a tempest. Falguni used all his skills as a bowman, and they both killed thousands of elephants, horses, and soldiers. Arjun then covered Drupada all around with his arrows. He then rushed towards the Panchal king on his chariot and fearlessly jumped into Drupad's chariot. Arjun then seized the powerful king Drupada just as Garuda seizes a colossal snake. After capturing King Drupada in this manner, Arjun produced him before his preceptor Dronacharya.

Drona smilingly addressed Drupada saying that they were great friends in Gurukulam but later-on, after becoming the king, Drupada had dishonoured his childhood friend saying that friendship can be only between equals and not between a king and a pauper. Drona went on to add that now he had won Drupad's kingdom and in order to make them equal he gave back half the kingdom to

Drupada, saying that now they could be friends as equals. Drupada was given the southern side of Bhagirathi whereas Drona retained its northern side. Dronacharya extended the hand of friendship as an equal. Dronacharya's generosity did not have any positive effect on Drupada; instead, he felt that his pride was humbled and taking revenge from Drona became the passion of his life. The Panchal king went back to his kingdom but resorted to asceticism and sacrifices so that he could be blessed with a son who could slay Drona and a daughter who could marry Arjun.

After a year of this incident, Yudhishthir was installed as the Crown Prince, as he was not only the eldest but was also well known for his firmness, benevolence, bravery, and patience (Gitapress, Adiparva: 1/138/1). At that time Yudhishthir had entered the 25th year of his life whereas Bhima and Duryodhana were in their 23rd year. Vrikodara alias Bhima received lessons in club fight and sword fight from Balaram, Krishna's elder brother. Sahadev and Nakul were extremely good looking and had become great car-warriors, always remaining loyal to their elder brothers.

After the installation of Yudhishthir as the Crown Prince, Arjun and Bhima defeated many kings of Eastern India. They killed in battle the valorous king of Sauvira. Arjun also defeated the king of Yavanas and subjugated many other kings of the East and sent immense booty to Dhritarashtra, the king of Kurus. On hearing about such heroic deeds of Pandavas, Dhritrashtra became extremely worried and anxious. He called his minister Kanik for consultation. He advised that Dhritrashtra should cleverly treat the Pandavas and he should protect himself and his sons from the sons of Pandu as they were stronger than his sons. About a year had passed when Pandavas were displaying their valour in this manner.

Thereafter Duryodhana, in consultation with Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni, hatched a vicious conspiracy to burn to death Kunti and her five sons. For Duryodhana, the most unforgivable offence of Pandavas was that the people of the Kuru kingdom praised Yudhishthir openly and expressed the desire that he should be crowned as their king immediately and without any further delay. On hearing such talks, Duryodhana got angry and upset and complained very bitterly to his father Dhritrashtra saying, "You were set aside because of your blindness, and your brother became the king. If Yudhishthir is to succeed his father, where do we stand? Neither we nor our children or grandchildren can ever aspire to be the kings. My patience has got exhausted. Send all the Pandavas to Varanavat immediately. In their absence, I would be able to win the goodwill of ministers, courtiers, and people by using all kind of means, good as well as evil, and I shall purchase the loyalty of many of them by making them wealthy. Once we secure the kingdom for ourselves, Pandavas would be rendered helpless."

Dhritarashtra's mind got shaken and disturbed; he yielded to his son's counsel. The unsuspecting Pandavas could be easily persuaded by Dhritarashtra to go and live in Varanavat (modern-day Baghpat, located adjacent to Hastinapur, i.e. Meerut) for some time. Duryodhana was elated as he had already hatched a conspiracy to kill all the Pandavas at Varanavat. By bribing Purochana, Duryodhana had got a beautiful palace built for Pandavas, which was made of flammable materials like lac, ghee, jute and oil. The idea was that when Pandavas settle down comfortably in the wax palace, it would be put on fire at night so that they all get burnt during sleep. It would be accepted as an accidental tragedy, and nobody would get blamed for their death. The entire conspiracy was in the knowledge of Dhritarashtra.

Duryodhana had started winning over the ministers and eminent citizens of Hastinapur by bestowing on them wealth and honours. Then one day before the royal court, the ministers began describing that Varanavat, where a charming palace had been built, was having festive looks because of the festival of Pashupati being celebrated there. King Dhritrashtra at that time suggested to Pandavas to go and enjoy the festivities in Varanavat. Thereafter, Yudhishthir on behalf of all the Pandavas took permission from the King, Bhishma, Vidur, Drona and all the Kuru princes; then all the Pandavas left for Varanavat. Duryodhana took Purochana aside and instructed him to give all possible luxurious facilities in the wax palace to Pandavas and wait for an opportunity to set it on fire when they are most unsuspecting, and no blame should ever come on Kuru princes.

Vidur and many citizens of Hastinapur had followed the Pandavas for some distance, feeling grief-stricken at the banishment of Pandavas from the capital city of Hastinapur by the wicked king Dhritarashtra, who was duplicity personified. Vidur had also come to know about the conspiracy hatched by Duryodhana and Purochana. He took Yudhishthir aside and warned him that, he who forestalls the wicked schemes of a cunning enemy with full self-control could always escape destruction just like a rat who, while living in a hole, escapes unhurt even during a forest fire. Yudhishthir said that he had understood what Vidur wanted to convey. In response to an enquiry from mother Kunti Devi, Yudhishthir informed that the palace at Varanavat was made of flammable materials and they must know the way to escape. Citizens of Varanavat extended a warm welcome to Pandavas. Pandu brothers enjoyed their hospitality and lived with them for about 10 days, when Purochana was looking after them with all the indulgence. After 10 days, Purochana announced that the palace was ready and they could move therein.

CHAPTER 5

Pandavas escaped from the Wax Palace of Varanavat and Bhima killed Demon Bakasur

Yudhishthir inspected the palace and verified that it was made of combustible materials. He shared this fact with his brothers, but they all decided to keep this knowledge as a closely guarded secret and also decided to live in the wax palace, making it appear to Purochana that they were living most comfortably. Then a few days later, a person skilled in mining/digging, sent by Vidur came and met the wise Pandavas. With the approval from Yudhishthir, he started digging a subterranean passage from the centre of the palace keeping its mouth covered due to fear of Purochana. Pandavas were behaving as if they were unaware of the conspiracy; during the day they would go hunting in the forest in order to familiarise themselves about the forest routes and during the nights they would keep their arms ready.

Almost a year went by in this manner, and the digging of the subterranean passage was complete. At that time, Yudhishthir thought that it was time for them to escape (1/147/1). Yudhishthir was now in the 26th year of his life. Mother Kunti Devi arranged for a feast for Brahmans and gave alms to poor people very liberally. Impelled by fate, a Nishad woman with her five sons came there and enjoyed the food and drinks. All of them thereafter fell asleep on the Palace floor. Then Bhima set fire to the wax palace, especially where Purochana was asleep. All the five

Pandavas, along with their mother Kunti, escaped through the subterranean route. In the forest significantly strong and energetic Vrikodara, another name for Bhima practically carried them to safety.

The people of Varanavat were shocked to look at the burning palace, and it became clear to them that the palace was made of flammable materials. They did not doubt the fact that Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana had hatched a conspiracy to kill innocent and noble Pandavas. They saw the burnt bodies of the Nishad woman, her five sons, and Purochana; presuming that all Pandavas had been burnt to death, they sent information to Dhritarashtra. King Dhritrashtra bewailed loudly to make it appear to the outside world that he was most grief-stricken and sent his representatives to Varanavat to perform the last rites of Pandavas. From that time onwards, Dhritrashtra, Duryodhana, Karna, Shakuni and others lived happily and peacefully. The reason being that they were fully reassured in their minds that all the five Pandavas had been killed and Kuru kingdom, with its beautiful capital city Hastinapur, would ever remain under their rule.

On the other hand, the five Pandu brothers, along with their mother Kunti, kept walking through the forest, and when they reached the banks of river Ganga, they met a man, who was sent by Vidur. He had brought a swift-moving secure boat for them. All Pandavas were seated in the boat, and that man rowed it for them. Taking them across the Ganga and repeatedly conveying Vidur's blessings for them, the man went back to the place from where he had come. It was already dark, and they were standing in a dense forest fearing that if Duryodhana or his men recognise them, they would surely be killed through deceit. They walked in the forest to go as far away as they could. Tired, fatigued, and thirsty, they all sat down unable to bear the pangs of thirst any more.

Kunti Devi stretched her legs and immediately went off to sleep. Bhima was extremely anguished looking at such pitiable condition of queen Kunti and Crown Prince Yudhishthir. He wished that only if he could manage to get the permission of Yudhishthir, he would immediately go and send Dhritrashtra, as well as Duryodhana, to Yama's abode. With such angry thoughts in mind, Bhima forced his way through the dense forest in search of water. He wetted his upper garment and filled two cups of lotus leaves with water and brought it for his mother and siblings, who were dying due to thirst.

Thereafter, for some time, sinless Bhima sat wondering that Bhima sat wondering why wicked Dhritrashtra and wily Duryodhana were trying to harass and kill them in this manner, when they had ever remained kind to them, when other creatures of nature lived peacefully together. Bhima kept awake while his brothers and mother were fast asleep. Quite near to that place lived two man-eater

demons, named Hidimb and his sister Hidimba. Hidimb developed an insatiable desire for eating the human flesh and sent Hidimba to kill and bring those sleeping men so that they could enjoy eating their flesh. Hidimba went, but looking at tall and handsome Bhima, she was filled with a desire for him. She then transformed herself into a beautiful damsel and proposed to Bhima so that she could get united with him. Bhima, however, told her that he was never going to wake up his sleeping brothers, nor would he leave them unguarded. Hidimb got restless at the delay and came to that very place. Watching her sister's attraction for Bhima, he wanted to kill her but then Bhima intervened.

Dragging that demon by the hair, Bhima killed him by dividing his body into two parts. Hidimba now begged with Bhima to fulfil her desire. She also requested Kunti to give appropriate orders to Bhima promising that she would ever remain faithful to him as well as to her. Yudhishthir then intervened to say that she could enjoy herself in the company of Bhima from the sunrise to sunset. Bhima and Hidimba went away, enjoying together for the whole day. From this union, a son, Ghatotkach, was born, who always remained faithful to the Pandavas and played a crucial role later on during the war.

After the sunset, Bhima came back. Pandavas kept on walking tired and fatigued. Kunti was so tired that Bhima had to carry her on his shoulders. They met Sage Vyas on the way. Kunti narrated to him the story of their sorrows. Sage Vyas consoled them, saying that no virtuous man is strong enough to live always in virtue and no sinner can live always performing sinful acts. Life is a tangled web in which happiness and sorrow, virtue and sin stand side by side and everyone has to bear the consequences of his/her actions. He advised them to save their lives by living in the garb of Brahmans in Ekachakra City (probably located somewhere in Etawah District of Uttar Pradesh). After walking for several days, they all reached Ekachakra and lived with a Brahmin. Staying in the garb of Brahmins, they would go begging for food and bring it to Kunti, who would divide the food into two equal portions. One would go to Bhima as he was a man of enormous strength, giant size and needed more food. Kunti and her four sons would share the other half. They lived for many months in this manner.

One day when four brothers went to beg for food, Bhimasen stayed back with his mother. Suddenly they heard loud lamentations from the house of the Brahman. Kunti went to enquire about the reasons for distress and offer her help. However, Brahman told them that nobody could extend any help and that he, along with his wife, daughter and son, have decided to embrace death. On being prodded, Brahman told that when a king is weak, the citizens are insecure. For many years a Rakshasa named Bakasur had started living in a cave outside the city. Whenever he felt hungry, he would kill many citizens simultaneously.

Finally, an agreement was reached between the demon and the citizens of Ekachakra that once every week the citizens of Ekachakra would send a carriage full of food, drawn by two bullocks with one human being and Bakasur could eat all of them. As a result, turn by turn, one person went from every household to become the food of the man-eating demon. Sobbing bitterly, the Brahman added that now it was their turn. The Brahman did not want to sacrifice any of his family members and also did not wish to leave them unprotected by surrendering his own life. Therefore they had decided that all four of them would go to be eaten by the demon.

Kunti was deeply moved. With the desire to help the Brahman family, she narrated the entire incident to Bhima, who offered very enthusiastically that he would go and kill that demon and discharge their debt not only towards the Brahman family but also towards all the residents of Ekachakra. Kunti went back and made the offer that she had five sons and that one of them would go to Bakasur in place of the Brahman. Initially, the Brahman family was reluctant to accept the offer on moral grounds, but then Kunti convinced them that her son was brave and that he would be able to kill the demon. She also told them to keep the whole event secret, because she was afraid that on hearing about the incident, wily Duryodhana might suspect that Bhima had killed Bakasur and that their security might get put to risk.

Bhima's face was lit, he was thrilled at the prospect of killing the demon and enjoying sumptuous food. Eventually, the other four brothers came back. On learning about Bhima going to carry the food for Bakasur, Yudhishthir was extremely worried as he thought that their mother had put their security at risk because they were all surviving the difficult times due to prowess of Bhima. However, Kunti assured him about the dexterity of Bhima and their duty as Kshatriyas to save the Brahmans and also repay the debt of hospitality extended by the Brahman family during their difficult times. After the night passed away, Bhima carried the cartload of food to the cannibal Bakasur.

Stopping outside the Rakshasa's cave, Bhima started eating the food brought for Bakasur. Watching this Bakasur was furious, and he pounced upon Bhima, but Bhima just ignored him and continued to enjoy eating the food. Bakasur uprooted some trees and attacked Bhima, but these were just pushed aside by him. Thereafter, both of them dragged each other and fought with their full might. Seeing Bakasur fatigued and exhausted, Bhima pressed the cannibal on the earth, placed his knee on the middle of his back, and broke him into two parts with great force. Vomiting blood, Bakasur fell dead. Bhima dragged him and placed the cannibal just outside the city gate and went back unnoticed by anyone.

Next morning the news of the killing of Bakasur spread like wildfire. The citizens of Ekachakra came out in thousands and were astonished to look at the cannibal lying dead in a pool of blood. They all wanted to meet the brave man who had performed that unprecedented feat. They came to the house of Brahman, where Pandavas were also living and wanted to know the sequence of events. The humble Brahman only told that a well built Brahman, learned in Vedas, had come offering to carry the food for Bakasur in his place and after that what happened he did not know.

CHAPTER 6

Arjun hit the target and won Draupadi's hand during Swayamvar in Panchal

Just a few days later, a Brahman came on a visit and the Pandavas learnt from him that king Drupada had organized a *Swayamvar* so that his gorgeous daughter Draupadi could select a groom for her. They also learnt that Draupadi's father, King Drupada, had kept such a strict condition that only an exceptionally capable bowman would be able to win Draupadi's hand. That Brahman guest also narrated the story of the birth of Dhrishtadhyumna as well as of Draupadi. King Drupada had never forgotten his humiliation at the hands of Drona through the prowess of Arjun. With the desire to get a courageous son capable of killing Drona and a beautiful daughter who could marry Dhanurdhari Arjun, Drupada conducted many sacrifices and observed austerities.

Two learned sages of rigid vows, named Yaja and Upayaja, conducted the yajna to fulfil the desires of King Drupada. Sanctified libations were put on yajna fire, accompanied by appropriate mantras. Out of the flames of this yajna was born Dhrishtadhyumna, who was effulgent as fire and possessed extraordinary strength. A little later Draupadi, who possessed celestial beauty, was also born and was named Panchali. King Drupada, his wife and the citizens of South Panchal celebrated their birth with joy.

King Drupada of Panchal had organized a grand ceremony for the swayamvar of his beautiful and accomplished daughter in his capital city Kampilya. Kings and

princes from all over Bharatavarsha had come with the desire to win her hand. A large number of Brahmans were going to Panchal to witness the ceremonies; they also wanted to get a share of the wealth which would be distributed. Kunti judged that her sons also had a deep-rooted desire to go to Panchal to witness the ceremonies. She also thought that they should not live in one place for a very long time. Therefore, she suggested to her sons that they all should also go to Panchal (probably located between Tarai region and River Charmanwati (Chambal); touched borders of Kuru kingdom).

Yudhishthir gave his consent; they all moved towards Southern Panchal country ruled by King Drupada. Crossing forests and stopping on the banks of many lakes, Pandavas reached the kingdom of Panchal. They lived like Brahmans in the city for a few days and took refuge in a potter's house. The kings and princes had reached South Panchal from far and wide, and when the ceremonies started, they were given beautiful seats in the majestic hall. Brahmans were also seated with full honour and respect.

Duryodhana and Karna were sitting amongst the kings whereas Pandava brothers were sitting amongst the Brahmans. After 15 days of festivities, there came the much-awaited day. Draupadi's brother Dhrishtadhyumna escorted Draupadi into the assembly. She was attired in the best of clothes and adorned with the divine looking ornaments. Nobody could take his eyes off that divine beauty at that time. Then Dhrishtadhyumna announced, "Hear, O assembled kings, this is the bow and those are the arrows and also see above the mark. Shoot the target placed above through the central aperture of the revolving disk and anyone of noble birth achieving this feat will win my sister's hand."

After that, Dhrishtadhyumna announced the names, lineage, and achievements of the assembled kings one by one to Draupadi. Duryodhana, Dushasana, and Karna from Kuru kingdom; Shakuni and Brihadbala sons of Subala, the king of Gandhar, had also come to win Draupadi's hand. Well-known kings named Bhoja, Virata, Susharma were also seen seated there. Kings Kamboja, Shalya and Sushen were present. Jayadratha, Chitrangada, and powerful Jarasandh were also seen in their best attire. Shri Krishna and Balaram, mighty sons of Devaki and Vasudeva, were also seen sitting amongst the kings (Gitapress, Adiparva: 1/185).

All those kings tried their hand one by one, but many of them failed even to lift the bow, many others were unable to string the bow whereas some of them were unable to shoot the target. There was seen disappointment and sadness all around. Then Karna, king of Anga Desh proceeded to try his luck. Just at that time, Draupadi announced that she would not choose a Suta for her husband. However, in the Madras Edition of Mahabharat, it is mentioned that Karna had succeeded in

lifting and stringing the bow, but just at that time the string slid back, and the mighty bow jumped out of his hands. Thus Karna also failed in hitting the target.

When all the kings failed to hit the target, Arjun got up from amongst the Brahmans to try his bowman ship. There were a loud protest and uproar. While Kshatriyas opposed the move, the Brahmans were divided. Some Brahmans were against, and some were in favour of a Brahman trying his luck. Looking at Arjun's confidence, many of them believed that he might be able to hit the target. Arjun came near the bow, prayed to God almighty. Then he picked up five arrows, shot the target through the orifice. Thereupon arose a colossal uproar, Brahmans were dancing with joy whereas Kshatriyas were extremely displeased.

When the uproar was at highest levels, Yudhishthir, Nakul and Sahadev silently left and reported the sequence of events to Kunti. Bhima stayed back to ensure the protection of Arjun. King Drupada felt exceedingly rejoiced, and Draupadi proceeded to garland Arjun, the winner. Furious with anger, Kshatriya kings darted toward Arjun intending to kill him. Bhima stood in front of them with an uprooted tree, looking like Yama himself. At that time, Krishna told Balaram that the great bowman who shot the target was Arjun and the hero who defeated the Kshatriya kings was Vrikodara, all-powerful Pandav Prince Bhima.

Then suddenly mighty kings attacked Arjun and Bhima from all sides but could not withstand their counter-attack. Shalya, who was endued with great strength, challenged Bhima; a fierce battle started. Finally, Vrikodara lifted Shalya and threw him at a distance. After fighting for some time, even Karna accepted defeat at the hands of Arjun. There was commotion all around. The Kshatriyas wanted to know about the family in which those two heroes were born. By that time, the whole world believed that the Pandavas had already perished in the fire in the wax palace at Varanavat. Finally, Shri Krishna escorted Bhima and Arjun along with Draupadi out of that unruly aggressive crowd, and they all went to the potter's house in Panchal Pradesh where they lived. Krishna and Balaram followed them from behind.

On reaching the house of the potter and with great excitement, Arjun called out for his mother and asked her to see what great gift they had brought in alms that day. Without coming out, Kunti commanded from inside that all five brothers should enjoy together whatever they had brought. Eventually, she came out and looked at that supremely beautiful bride Draupadi. In order to extricate herself from the inappropriate words uttered by her, she took Draupadi to Yudhishthir and narrated the entire event. He said that since she was won by Arjun, only he should marry her. However, Arjun said that words uttered by their mother in innocence must be honoured and therefore Draupadi should marry all five brothers one by one in order of seniority.

At that time, all five brothers looked at Draupadi, who was created as the most charming beauty by the Creator, and God of love invaded their hearts. Fearing that there might crop up disunion amongst the five brothers, Yudhishthir at that time said that let that blessed Draupadi be the wife of all five brothers. Krishna and Balaram then entered the potter's house, and Yudhishthir was surprised how they could recognize Pandavas. Krishna replied that fire, even if it is covered, could be easily identified; no-one other than Arjun could have shot the target that day to win the hand of Draupadi. Panchal prince Dhrishtadhyumna, who was Draupadi's brother, had also followed them and he was watching from hiding the entire sequence of events. He also watched that Draupadi stood married to all five brothers who were sons of the great King Pandu. He quickly went back and reported all these facts to his father. He was happy to hear that the man who won Draupadi's hand was the greatest bowman of the world known as Arjun, but he was upset that his daughter had to marry all the five brothers. Since Pandavas had lived for about a year in Ekchakra city, Arjun was at that time 24 years' old and Yudhishthir had entered his 28th year.

King Drupada wanted to celebrate the marriage of his beautiful daughter in grand style. So he invited people from the family of the bridegroom by sending many chariots and arranged for a great feast. Drupada observed that those brave men dressed in deerskin sat very comfortably on costly sofas and were enjoying the service of a great variety of food cooked by experts and served by well-dressed servants. King Drupada was now fully convinced that these five brave men had royal blood and that his desire had been fulfilled because Arjun had won the hand of his daughter, but he was anguished about getting Draupadi married to all five of them.

Just at that time Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas reached there and was greeted with great respect by everyone. He took King Drupada aside and explained to him how the marriage of one woman with many men is permissible under the Shastras under exceptional circumstances. He also narrated to the king the story of Draupadi's previous birth when after tough asceticism, she had been offered a boon by Lord Shankar. Draupadi at that time had said that she wanted a husband endued with all accomplishments. Lord Shankar had blessed her with the boon that she would have five husbands, and all of them combined would have all the virtues. King Drupada, after that, gave his consent to marry his daughter to all the five brothers. Then Sage Vyas declared that Draupadi should first be married to Yudhishthir on that very day in Pushya Nakshatra. Then all the five brothers bathed and were attired in costly clothes and jewels. Their priest Dhaumya was invited to conduct the ceremonies.

Priest Dhaumya conducted the wedding ceremonies as ordained by the scriptures. First of all, Yudhishthir walked around the sacred fire holding the hands of bride Draupadi. After that Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahadev were married one by one with Yajnaseni Draupadi. King Drupada presented the bride as well as the bridegrooms with valuable gifts and wealth. Thereon for some days, Pandavas lived as the honoured guests of the king of Panchal. The kings who had assembled to win the hand of that beautiful damsel Draupadi had now realized that the one who hit the target to win Draupadi was the best bowman of the world named Arjun. They also realized that Pandavas had not perished in the wax palace fire in Varanavat; they had escaped to safety and that all five of them had got married to Draupadi. They all went back with Duryodhana, Dushasana, and Karna feeling angry and anguished to learn about the survival of Pandavas. They went back to Hastinapur intending to hatch another conspiracy to kill innocent Pandavas, who had never tried to harm Duryodhana or any other Kuru princes in any manner.

Vasudeva, who was Lord Krishna's father, was the Yadava chief and he was the brother of Kunti. In Mahabharat, references to Lord Krishna start only from this event of Draupadi Swayamvar in Panchal. Lord Krishna went back to Dvaravati, i.e. **Dwarka** and sent precious gifts for the Pandavas. He sent them costly dresses, beautiful blankets, ornate carpets, hundreds of vessels, gold coins and servants. Yudhishthir accepted all these presents happily and gratefully.

CHAPTER 7

Pandavas were given Khandavaprastha as half share of the Kuru kingdom

Vidur went to inform Dhritrashtra that Kaurava's stars were on the ascendant as a Kuru prince had won Draupadi during *Swayamvar*. Thinking that Duryodhana accomplished this great deed, the king ordered that let costly jewels be made for Draupadi, and a royal welcome should be organised. At this stage, Vidur informed that it was Arjun, and not Duryodhana, who had hit the revolving target to win Draupadi. He also informed that all five Pandavas and Kunti had escaped alive from the fire in the wax palace. Dhritarashtra was a hypocrite to an enormous extent. While he was upset and worried to hear the news of the survival of Pandavas, he told Vidur that sons of Pandu were as dear to him as his sons and he was happy that they have survived and they have done the great deed of aligning the mighty kingdom of Drupada to the side of Kurus.

Duryodhana, Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni were burning with jealousy and anger. They all went to Dhritrashtra saying that a scheme has to be devised to annihilate Pandavas to secure the kingdom for the sons of Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra revealed that he was also thinking on the same lines but did not want Vidur to have an inkling of his thoughts. Duryodhana suggested that they should try to divide Pandavas, but Karna suggested that they should attack them when they were still in Panchal, unprepared to wage war. Dhritarashtra decided to consult Bhishma and Dronacharya and called them to his presence. They both suggested that so much muck had been thrown on Dhritrashtra by the people for

burning Pandavas in the wax palace that the king needed to come out clean. He should immediately invite Kunti with her five sons and daughter-in-law Draupadi and extend them a royal welcome. After that, the kingdom should be divided into two parts, and half the part should be given to Pandavas, crowning Yudhishthir as the king. Karna and Duryodhana disagreed with them. Then Dhritarashtra called Vidur who also endorsed the suggestion made by Bhishma and Drona.

Finally, Dhritarashtra sent Vidur to South Panchal to request king of Drupada to send his daughter Draupadi, five Pandavas and Kunti to Hastinapur so that a royal welcome could be extended to them. After hearing reassuring words of Vidur, and with the approval of King Drupada and Krishna Vasudeva, Kunti and Yudhishthir agreed to go to Hastinapur with Vidur. They were extended a warm welcome on their arrival in Hastinapur and were taken to the palace. After they had taken some rest, Dhritarashtra called them and informed them that they should go to Khandavaprastha and consider it as half the kingdom and live there in peace so that there were no quarrels and wars. Accepting the offer in the interest of peace, Pandavas left for that fearful forest area named Khandavaprastha. It also had an old city from where Kuru kings had ruled before moving their capital to Hastinapur. Khandavaprastha was an ancient forest which lay to the west of Yamuna River, in and around modern-day Delhi territory. Pandavas used a part of their ancestral property and also cleared a part of this forest to build their new kingdom, called Indraprastha.

Pandavas worked very hard. They got the new buildings and roads constructed and also built a beautiful palace. Lord Krishna and Balaram had come from Dwarka to help them settle down. Seeing the city developing fast numerous Brahmans learned in Vedas, and several men well-skilled in different arts also came and settled down there. This kingdom was given the name Indraprastha. Many charming gardens were developed with beautiful blossoming trees; these included Amras, Amarataka, Kadamba, Ashoka, Champaka, Panasa, Sala, Tamala, Bakula, and Ketak trees. Besides, Amolak, Ankola, Atimuktaka, Karavira, Parijat and various other trees were also grown in those gardens (1/207/41-44).

Archaeo-botanical and Palynological studies have revealed that many of these trees and plants, mentioned in Mahabharat, did exist in these areas 5000 years back, i.e. around 3000 BCE. The 3000 BCE belonged to the period when the mid-Holocene climatic optima were coming to an end, and Central, as well as Western regions of India, had started witnessing a reduction in monsoonal rainfall. A chapter contributed by Dr Premendra Priyadarshi on how the palaeobotanical studies of Mahabharat relate the plants of those days with 3000 BC is included in this book.

PLANTS OF INDRAPRASTHA (DELHI) AREA, DESCRIBED IN ADI PARVA OF MAHABHARAT

Sr. No.	Sanskrit name of the plant in Mahabharat	Adi Parva/ Sub-chapter / verse number	Common name Hindi / English	Botanical name
1	Amras, अमरस	1/207 /41	Aam / Mango	*Mangifera indica*
2	Ketaka, केतक	1/207/ 42	Kewra	*Pandanus odorifera*
3	Kadamba, कदम्ब	1/207/ 41	Bel / Bael	*Aegle marmelos*
4	Ashoka, अशोक	1/207/ 41	Baans / Bamboo	*Bambusa sp.*
5	Champaka, चम्पक	1/207/41	Champa	*Azadirachta indica*
6	Panasa, पनास	1/207/41	Katahal / Jackfruit	*Artocarpus heterophyllus*
7	Bakul, बकुल	1/207/42	Medlar/ Bulletwood	*Mimusops elengi*
8	Jambu, जम्बू	1/207/43	Jamun / Malabar Plum	*Syzygium jambos*
9	Sal, साल	1/207/42	Saal / Piney Varnish	*Vateria Indica*
10	Karavira, करवीरा	1/207/44	Kaner / Oleander	*Nerium Indicum*

PICTURES OF SOME PLANTS OF INDRAPRASTHA (DELHI) AREA, DESCRIBED IN ADI PARVA OF MAHABHARAT

Bakul (Amras)
(© www.gardenworld.in)

(Mango)
(© www.treehut.com)

Jambu (Jamun)
(© icwow.blogspot.in)

Panas(Katahal, Jackfruit)
(© www.toptropicals.com)

Sal
(© www.destourist.com)

Karavira (Kaner)
(© www.shaileshnursery.com

After having ensured that the Pandavas were well settled in their new abode, Lord Krishna and Balaram left for Dwarka. Mother Kunti, all the five Pandav brothers, lived very happily and in perfect harmony with Draupadi. They were expanding the boundaries of their kingdom by winning over new territories. Their wealth was growing with every passing day. One day divine sage Narad came to

meet the Pandavas. He advised them to establish some rule amongst them to ensure that there were no conflicts amongst them because they were sharing a wife. The five Pandava brothers consulted with one another and established a rule that when any one of them were with Draupadi, then any one of the other four would not see her. Whoever breaks that rule would have to go to the forest for twelve years.

The people of the kingdom of Pandavas were very prosperous. Many years (at least 6-7 years) went by in this manner. Then one day, a Brahman came at the doors of the palace and cried very bitterly with grief because his kine and wealth were being taken away by thieves. Arjun wanted to extend immediate help but hesitated because his weapons were kept in the room in which Yudhishthir was sitting with Draupadi. Weeping Brahman repeatedly urged for immediate help. Moved by mercy and a deep sense of duty, Arjun entered the room and informing Yudhishthir he took away his weapons. He then went with the Brahman, banished the thieves and that heroic Savyasachi Dhananjya (another name of Arjun) came back victorious. Thereupon, he sought permission from the king Yudhishthir to observe the vow by going in exile for twelve years. Yudhishthir tried to convince Arjun that he had not broken any vow as he had only preserved Rajadharma. However, Arjun persisted and with the permission of his eldest brother went to the forests for twelve years (Adi Parva: 1/212/35).

Arjun travelled all over the country and saw many charming forests and lakes, rivers and seas, countries and pilgrimages. After visiting Anga, Vanga and Kalinga, Arjun went to Chitravahan, the virtuous king of Manipur. He had a beautiful daughter named Chitrangada; looking at her, Arjun fell in love. He went to the king, introduced himself, and asked for the hand of Chitrangada. The king agreed with one condition that since he did not have a son, so the first son born out of Arjun's union with Chitrangada would perpetuate Chitravahan's race. Chitrangada was married to Arjun and had a valorous son named Babhruvahan. After king Chitravahan died, Babhruvahan was crowned the King of Manipur. Babhruvahan had taken part in the Ashwamedha Yajna performed by the Pandavas after their victory in war.

After visiting several other forests, kingdoms and pilgrimage places, Arjun, at last, reached **Prabhas**, where Lord Krishna came to meet his dear friend. The citizens of Dwarka also extended him a warm welcome. A few days later a great festival was being celebrated by the Vrishnis and the Andhakas. Lord Krishna and Arjun went through the festivities together. Arjun happened to see the beautiful daughter of Vasudeva and sister of Krishna; her name was Subhadra. He was overwhelmed by desire at that time and could not take his eyes off Subhadra. Lord

Krishna told him that she was his sister. Arjun replied that if she agreed to marry him, he would undoubtedly consider himself to be the happiest person in the world. Lord Krishna was aware that Balaram wanted his sister Subhadra to marry Duryodhana, but she was opposed to that idea. Keeping this position in mind, Lord Krishna at that time replied that daughters of Kshatriya kings were either married through swayamvar or were abducted. After having received the implied consent of lord Krishna, Arjun sent swift messengers to Yudhishthir for seeking his permission for his marriage with Subhadra, after abducting her.

After obtaining permission from Yudhishthir, Arjun sat in a chariot, equipped with the best of weapons. At that time, he saw Subhadra coming back from Raivatak Hill and started moving towards Dwarka (modern-day Girnar hill near Junagarh in Gujarat is believed to be the Raivatak Hill). Arjun, struck by the arrows of God of love, then proceeded towards Subhadra and forcibly took her in his chariot. Arjun sped towards Indraprastha. The guards went and reported the facts about the abduction of Subhadra by Arjun. Shri Krishna's elder brother Balaram was outraged. He wanted to immediately take his forces to intercept and defeat Arjun's nefarious designs. However, Shri Krishna extended support to Arjun's action and wanted that he should be called back immediately for formal solemnization of his marriage with Subhadra. He also added that no one amongst the Vrishni race was capable of defeating Arjun. Finally, Shri Krishna's advice prevailed. Vrishnis went and brought back Arjun, and his marriage with Subhadra was solemnized. Balaram and Krishna, who were both very fond of their sister Subhadra, gave very exquisite and valuable presents to the bride and the groom. Besides providing many chariots, elephants, horses and cows, they also gave costly garments, ornaments, and coins of gold.

Balaram and Shri Krishna, along with many Vrishni heroes, escorted Subhadra and Arjun to Indraprastha. Yudhishthir and all other Pandavas extended a warm welcome to Arjun and Subhadra. Vrishnis enjoyed the hositality of Yudhishthir for some days. Initially, Draupadi was upset, but when Subhadra requested her to consider her as her maid, her heart melted. Very soon the humility and pleasant talk of well-mannered Subhadra won the hearts of Draupadi as well as of Kunti, and she became a loved member of the family. Balaram and other Vrishnis went back pleased with the hospitality of Pandu princes, but Lord Krishna stayed back for some more days with Arjun, as he was extremely fond of him.

CHAPTER 8

Yudhishthir's desire to conduct Rajasuya Yajna; his brothers went to collect tributes from kings of entire Bharatavarsha

Arjun had come back victorious and glorious to Indraprastha after completing 12 years of his banishment (Geetapress/Adi Parva: 1/220/14). After about a year, Subhadra gave birth to a handsome and brave prince, who was named Abhimanyu. Yudhishthir celebrated the birth of this extraordinary child by distributing wealth amongst the Brahmanas and the poor. Lord Krishna was very fond of this child, and he performed all the usual rites on his birth. At the time of Abhimanyu's birth, Arjun had entered 43rd year of his life (24+6+12+1), whereas **Yudhishthir was about 47 years old.**

Shri Krishna went back to Dwarka after some time. Abhimanyu started growing into a fearless, brave boy, invincible in battle. His face was like that of a full moon, and he was skilled in using various kinds of weapons. When Abhimanyu was growing into a young boy, Draupadi also gave birth to five sons one by one. Draupadi had begotten Prativindhya by Yudhishthir, Sutasoma by Bhim, Shrutakarmana by Arjun, Shatanik by Nakul, and Shrutasena by Sahadev. Priest Dhaumya performed all the rites like birth samsakara and subsequently Upanayana samsakara etc. Pandava brothers were so powerful that they brought under their

rule many kings and monarchs. Yudhishthir indulged in all the three pursuits of Dharma, Artha and Kama. The subjects loved and admired their king because he was liberal, merciful, and judicious.

Then after a few days, Lord Krishna again came to spend some days with Arjun. One day Krishna and Arjun, along with their friends, went to the shores of Yamuna to enjoy themselves. They enjoyed food, drinks, and various kinds of sports. Draupadi and Subhadra, while enjoying, gave valuable items to the maids who were serving them. Then one day a massive fire broke out in Khandavavan area. The entire flora and fauna were getting destroyed; trees were burnt, forest animals were getting consumed by fire in hundreds and thousands. However, Shri Krishna said that there was no need to put an end to Khandavavan fire as it was for the ultimate good of humanity. Only six people had escaped that blazing fire, and one of them was Maya, a great Architect.

Expressing his gratitude to Shri Krishna for saving his life, Mayasur offered his services to him. Krishna, in response, said that he should build a grand and exquisite assembly hall for Yudhishthir. Maya then selected a beautiful piece of land for construction of an exquisite Assembly Hall. He went to Mount Mainak and brought a celestial mace for Bhima, Devadatta Conch for Pandavas and some divine gems and jewels for fixing in the Assembly Hall. Shri Krishna left for Dwarka in his chariot flying Garuda banner. All the five Pandava brothers, as well as their other family members, bid a very warm and emotional farewell to Shri Krishna. During next fourteen months, Maya built a spacious assembly hall of great splendour, having a mixture of celestial and terrestrial lights, having a water tank with blooming lotuses and lilies, studded with jewels, gems, and precious stones (Sabha Parva: 2/3/37).

Before entering the Assembly Hall, Yudhishthir performed all the ceremonies prescribed in Shastras, gratified Brahmanas with sumptuous and delicious food as well as Dakshina; he also worshipped gods. The rishis and the kings were invited from far and wide to be a part of this ceremony. Those learned sages and exceedingly powerful kings enjoyed the hospitality and bowed before great emperor Yudhishthir. When Pandavas were sitting with great pride in that Assembly Hall, celestial sage Narad came there and was extended a pleasant reception by Dharmaraj Yudhishthir. He made several enquiries and gave many suggestions about running the kingdom, treatment of the subjects, maintaining the army and delivery of justice. Sage Narad advised that a king must always save his subjects from the fear of fire, snakes, disease, and demons. He also desired that king Yudhishthir must nurture the blind, the disabled, the orphans, and the hermits just like a father. Emperor Yudhishthir assured him that his subjects will always be kept

happy and satisfied, ministers will be given high regard, and there would be no thieves or crimes. He also assured Sage Narad that he would follow all the suggestions given by the great sage to improve his performance as an emperor further.

Maharshi Narad went around that superb Assembly Hall studded with precious stones and gems. Then that erudite Narad admired the Hall saying that Yudhishthir's Assembly Hall was better and more impressive than the assembly halls of Varuna, Kubera, and Brahma. Before leaving, sage Narad gave the example of ancient king Harishchandra, who had become even more glorious and influential after conducting Rajasuya yajna. Yudhishthir started discussing with his brothers the desirability of conducting Rajasuya yajna. He also consulted hermits, sages, ministers and warriors, who were generally inclined in favour of conducting the Rajasuya yajna. Then wishing to consult Shri Krishna about the desirability of conducting Rajasuya Yajna, Yudhishthir sent a messenger to Lord Krishna, who was the ruler of Dwarka. Shri Krishna came and met king Yudhishthir.

Yudhishthir and his Pandava brothers welcomed Shri Krishna. He went and paid respects to Kunti, his father's sister. Then Yudhishthir talked to Shri Krishna saying that sages and ministers were suggesting to him that he should conduct Rajsuya Yajna and assume the title of 'Emperor', but he was unable to make up his mind. He wanted to have Krishna's advice, mainly because only a king who could win respect and allegiance of all the kings could perform that yajna. Shri Krishna replied that Yudhishthir was ruling from Indraprastha in all glory. All his brothers were mighty, yet they all obeyed him. Therefore, Yudhishthir was surely worthy of performing Rajasuya yajna. However, by way of caution Shri Krishna added that so long as king Jarasandh of Magadh was alive and unconquered, Yudhishthir would not be able to acquire the title of an 'Emperor'. Krishna added that after he had killed wicked Kaṃsa, son-in-law of Jarasandh, he could not live in peace in Mathura as Jarasandh kept on attacking the Yadus and even after three years Jarasandh could not be defeated.

Finally, Shri Krishna and Balaram had shifted their capital from Mathura to Dwarka so that they could live in peace. He advised Yudhishthir to devise a plan to kill Jarasandh. However, peace-loving Yudhishthir replied that he did not wish to shed blood of other kings and that it was a mere vanity and arrogance to aspire to achieve the title of an emperor. Bhima intervened to say that a Kshatriya king must be ambitious and that with his prowess, Arjun's dexterity, and Krishna's wisdom, it was indeed possible to kill Jarasandh. Shri Krishna at that time added that Jarasandh deserved to be killed as he was most wicked and vicious and that he had imprisoned eighty-six kings and princes and was trying to lay his hands on

fourteen more so that he could immolate a hundred kings together. Before he was able to commit such a great sin, another Kshatriya of prowess must kill him. Krishna then suggested that he accompanied by Bhima and Arjun could proceed to kill Jarasandh and save those eighty-six innocent kings from his captivity.

Yudhishthir replied that he was not willing to expose the life of Bhima and Arjun to any risk. However, Bhima and Arjun said that the life of a Kshatriya had no meaning without heroic deeds and that they agreed with Shri Krishna's advice and would like to accompany him to Magadh. Finally, Yudhishthir accepted the unanimous view to slay Jarasandh. Krishna, Arjun, and Bhima disguised themselves as hermits and entered the kingdom of Magadh (located in Bihar and has remained famous till date). The Kshatriya code of conduct of those days prescribed that a Kshatriya must accept the challenge of a duel, whether with or without weapons. On Krishna's advice, they all decided that there was no use of slaughtering the armies and that they would challenge Jarasandh to a duel.

Jarasandh was conducting yajna those days, and he welcomed the three disguised hermits to his palace in the sacrificial Hall. It was the practice of Jarasandh to meet noble guests at their convenience. Therefore he enquired about their lineage and sought to know the time convenient to them for the meeting. Lord Krishna replied that the other two were observing the vow of silence till midnight. Jarasandh went back to the palace and returned at midnight to talk to his guests. Looking at them and their hands bearing scars of the bow-string, Jarasandh demanded to know the truth.

After acquainting himself about who they were and after knowing that they had come to seek instant combat, Jarasandh responded that Krishna was a mere cow-boy and Arjun was still a lad; therefore he would not fight against them. However, since Bhima was famous for his valour, so he would engage in instant combat with him. The combat started; Bhima and Jarasandh were equally matched. They fought for many days. Finally, Bhima lifted Jarasandh, whirled him in the air, and dashed him to the ground. Then Bhima seized his legs and tore his body into two parts, and threw these parts in two opposite directions. Jarasandh was dead.

After that, three of them went inside the kingdom and released all the imprisoned kings and princes. All these kings and princes expressed their heartfelt gratefulness to Shri Krishna and the sons of Pritha and offered their services. Lord Krishna replied that most virtuous king Yudhishthir was desirous of conducting Rajasuya yajna and that they should extend all possible help to him. These kings joyfully assured all support in bestowing the title of 'Emperor' on Yudhishthir. These kings then presented invaluable gems and jewels to Krishna for getting them freed from Jarasandh's captivity.

Jarasandh's son, wise Sahadev also bowed before Shri Krishna and presented exquisite jewels to him. Shri Krishna gladly installed Jarasandh's son as the king of Magadh. With Jarasandh gone, the way for conducting Rajasuya yajna was now clear. Krishna, Bhima, and Arjun went back to Indraprastha; they advised Yudhishthir to assume the title of the emperor and perform Rajasuya Yajna without any delay. Yudhishthir welcomed them wholeheartedly. He also extended a hearty welcome to those liberated kings who had accompanied Shri Krishna to Indraprastha. Having received the command from Yudhishthir all those kings immediately left in chariots for their respective kingdoms. Lord Krishna also left for Dwarka. Yudhishthir kept on ruling in the best interest of the masses.

Then one day Arjun told Yudhishthir that he had obtained the best of bows named Gandiva and a couple of inexhaustible quivers. Furthermore, he was desirous of conquering many more kingdoms so that they pay tribute to Yudhishthir. Receiving benedictions from sages and Brahmanas, Arjun left accompanied by a large and powerful army. Simultaneously Bhima, Nakul, and Sahadev also went to conquer many kingdoms. Bhimasen conquered the kingdoms of the East, Sahadev of the South whereas Nakul conquered the kingdoms located in the western parts of Bharatavarsha.

That chastiser of foes Savyasachi Arjun defeated many powerful kingdoms located all over the northern regions of India. He defeated Kulinda, Anarta, and Prativindhya. Then he went to fight against king Bhagadatta of Pragajyotishapur. However, after fighting for a few days, Bhagadatta accepted Yudhishthir's superiority and extended a hand of friendship to Arjun. Next Arjun went ahead and subjugated Modapura, Vamadeva, Sudamana, and northern Uluka. Thereafter, Arjun marched towards King Vishvagashva in the city of Senavindu and conquered him as well. Arjun then defeated the brave Kshatriya kings of Kashmir. Finally, Arjun even defeated the most powerful kings of Balhika and Kamboja.

Continuing his expedition for conquests, Arjun crossed the white mountains, named the Himalayas. After conquering Kimpurushas, Arjun reached Manas Lake. Then Arjun conquered the regions ruled by Gandharvas and received some excellent horses from them as a tribute. Finally, Arjun went back to Indraprastha and offered to Dharmaraj all the wealth and conquests (Sabha Parva/27-28). After a few days, Bhima also came back from his victory march. He had subjugated Gandakas, Videhas, and Dasarnas. He then marched even against significantly powerful Shishupal, the king of Chedi. However, that clever king agreed to offer tribute to Yudhishthir without fighting. Bhima then defeated Kosalas, Nishadas, Lohityas and Kiratas. Loaded with wealth collected as a tribute, Bhima came back and offered all that wealth to Yudhishthir (Sabha Parva/29-30).

Sahadev had moved with a large army towards South. He vanquished powerful Surasenas, Matsyas, and Kuntibhoj. They all willingly accepted the sway of Pandava ruler and offered tributes. Sahadev went towards the countries watered by Narmada river; there he defeated the two heroic kings of Avanti named Vinda and Anuvinda. After collecting rich tributes from them, Sahadev proceeded to conquer the kings of Pandya and Kishkindha. Then, Sahadev subjugated the kings of Saurashtra, Bhojakata, and Talakata; he collected a rich pile of wealth as a tribute. After that, this powerful hero of great prowess conquered the kingdoms of Kerala, Pandya, Dravida and Andhra. After his expedition, the heroic Sahadev came back to his city and offered all the wealth and the victories to Dharmaraj Yudhishthir, making him extremely happy (Sabha Parva/31).

Handsome and intelligent Nakul had proceeded towards the west with his victorious armies. After conquering the kingdoms named Rohitaka and Trigartas, Nakul defeated the Shudras and Abhiras, living on the banks of Sarasvati River. He also defeated the country named after five rivers, i.e. Panchanadam. Next Nakul proceeded towards the south-west and reached the outskirts of Dwarka. Shri Krishna happily accepted the sway of Pandavas on behalf of all the Yadavas. Nakul made his uncle (mother's brother) Shalya also to recognise the suzerainty of Yudhishthir. Nakul then subjugated the Mlecchas and the Yavanas. Loaded with wealth and jewels carried on many camels, Nakul came back and offered all that wealth to Yudhishthir (Sabha Parva/32).

CHAPTER 9

Yudhishthir conducted Rajasuya Yajna after the construction of divine Assembly Hall in Indraprastha

Made to feel proud by the prowess of his all four brothers, and his treasury filled with wealth and valuables brought by them, Yudhishthir felt extremely happy and engaged himself in noble acts. His subjects were happy; crimes were very rare, and citizens usually did not have to suffer from floods and droughts. Sometime during those days, Yudhishthir thought of actually performing the Rajasuya sacrifice. At that time, Lord Krishna arrived in Indraprastha with colossal wealth and a large army, filling the atmosphere with the rattle of wheels of chariots. With his arrival, all the worries of Pandavas vanished.

Yudhishthir extended a hearty welcome to Shri Krishna. Then Yudhishthir addressed him saying that it was through his favour that he had acquired such vast wealth. He wanted to spend that wealth on Brahmans and charity, and therefore was seeking permission to celebrate Rajasuya Yajna. In response, Krishna extolled the virtues of Yudhishthir and asked him to start that yajna without much delay and assign some duty to Shri Krishna also. Then Yudhishthir commanded all his ministers and warriors to collect all the materials and articles needed for conducting Rajasuya Yajna at an enormous scale under the command of Sahadev.

Sahadev reported that all the materials had been collected. Dvaipayan Vyas himself became the Brahma in that sacrifice, and Susama became the chanter of Sam Veda. Then on a significantly sized ground, many buildings were erected. Sahadev was asked to send swift messengers to invite kings, Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and respectable Vaishyas and Shudras to participate in the Rajasuya yajna (Sabha Parva/33/40-41). All these people started reaching immediately, and they were all extended cordial warm hospitality. At the appropriate moment, Brahmanas installed Yudhishthir in the Rajasuya sacrifice. When most of the guests had arrived, Yudhishthir deputed Nakul to invite Bhishma and Dhritrashtra.

All the Kuru princes along with their preceptors and Bhishma Pitamah came joyfully to that yajna. Yudhishthir duly worshipped Bhishma and Drona. He assigned crucial positions to Kuru princes; Ashwatthama was asked to look after the Brahmans, Sanjay was to return worship to all invited kings, Kripa was made in-charge of gems and jewels. Duryodhana was appointed as the receiver of all tributes brought by kings, Vidur was assigned the responsibility of the exchequer. Dhritarashtra and Drona were the lords to be respected by all. Shri Krishna took upon himself the task of washing the feet of sages and Brahmans. During that Rajasuya sacrifice, Dharmaraj ensured that everybody was gratified: Celestials with ghee and oblations, guests with jewels and valuables and Brahmans with huge dakshinas (donations and gifts).

On the last day of the Rajasuya yajna, the time came for doing the honours on the occasion. The prevailing custom at that time was to render first honour to the guest who was considered most worthy of taking precedence over others. Yudhishthir enquired from grandsire Bhishma as to who should be extended the first honour. Bhishma emphatically expressed the opinion that Krishna, the Lord of Dwarka, deserved the first honour. He added that Krishna was the brightest because of his effulgence, strength, and prowess. Bhishma went on to add that Krishna had defeated many powerful Kshatriya kings; knowledge of Vedas, bravery, cleverness, humility, firmness, and prosperity all resided in Krishna.

Following grandsire's advice, Yudhishthir instructed Sahadev to offer first honour to Lord Krishna, according to the tradition. Shishupal, the king of Chedi, who hated Krishna intensely, could not tolerate this. He ridiculed the decision in a thunderous voice saying that nothing could be more unfair, detestable, and laughable than giving Krishna the first honour in the presence of so many more deserving dignitaries.

Shishupal mocked at Bhishma for recounting the great achievements of Shri Krishna like the killing of demon Pootna, slaughter of seven-headed serpent, and killing of Kaṃsa, which, according to Shishupal, were neither any noble acts nor

they displayed any bravery. He also ridiculed Bhishma saying that he was a childless, immoral character who had abducted Amba even though she wanted to get married to someone else. Shishupal also ridiculed Pandavas calling them illegitimate children and scoffed at Lord Krishna saying that he was a fool by birth and a cowherd by breeding and did not even deserve a place amongst noble people. Shishupal finally added insult to injury by criticising Bhishma in the severest language, calling him senile.

Bhishma got extremely angry and added that he who dared to say such impudent words against Krishna did not deserve any sympathy. Bhishma said that Krishna represented the origin of the universe and, in him, the world dissolved. Krishna is the Creator in whom all five elements, air, heat, water, space, earth are established. As Gayatri is foremost amongst all mantras, the king is foremost amongst men, ocean amongst the rivers, so is Krishna foremost in the entire universe. Sahadev then proceeded to offer the first Arghya to Krishna and challenged the kings to stop him if they had the requisite prowess.

Shishupal shouted aloud that by ignoring so many kings and preceptors, including Drona, Vyas, Drupada, Duryodhana, and Kripacharya, Yudhishthir was giving the first honour to Krishna, who was neither royal nor holy and that he would not tolerate that insult. After that, Shishupal called Shri Krishna impudent for accepting the undeserved honour. Then he got up to walk out of the assembly in protest and called upon the other kings to join him in protesting against the insult. Yudhishthir ran behind Shishupal to appease him with his polite words, but Shishupal was so angry that he did not take heed of the Yudhishthir's entreaties. He continued to shower choicest abuses on Shri Krishna and then Lord Krishna was enraged. Not able to stop the abuses from Shishupal, Shri Krishna finally severed the head of Shishupal with his Chakra, i.e. a discus, and thus killed him on the spot. Some kings at that time praised the Vrishni hero, while others criticised him but most of them sat speechlessly.

After this unfortunate event, Rajasuya Yajna was duly completed, and Yudhishthir was recognised as the 'Emperor'. Subsequently, all the kings and other guests took leave of Yudhishthir one by one. Then, Yudhishthir gave them valuable gifts and commanded his brothers to escort them to the boundaries of Khandavaprastha kingdom. At last Shri Krishna, who had guarded the yajna till its completion, also wanted to take leave. Yudhishthir and his brothers had grown so fond of him that they did not want to say goodbye to him. Krishna went to congratulate Kunti and bade farewell to Draupadi and Subhadra, his sister. Then Shri Krishna left in his chariot for Dwarka. All the guests, who had come to participate in Rajasuya Yajna, had left for their respective kingdoms. However,

Duryodhana and his uncle Shakuni stayed back in that divine looking assembly hall.

By this time, Yudhishthir was 56 years old, as, at the time of the birth of Abhimanyu, Yudhishthir was 46 years old. After that, Draupadi had given birth to five sons, and four Pandava brothers had gone on a winning expedition in all four directions of Bharatavarsha so that kings and princes accept the subjugation of Yudhishthir and he is enabled to fulfil his desire of conducting Rajasuya Yajna. Shri Krishna accompanied by Arjun and Bhima had gone to Magadh and killed powerful Jarasandh, Khandavavan was burnt and 14 months were taken by Mayasur to construct that celestial Assembly Hall in which Rajasuya Yajna was conducted. All this would have taken a minimum of ten years. Accordingly, Yudhishthir at the time of Rajasuya Yajna was 56 years old, Bhima and Duryodhana were 54 years old, Arjun and Shri Krishna were around 52 years old, whereas the twins had entered their 50th year.

After the Yajna, Sage Vyas, surrounded by his disciples, came to meet Yudhishthir who worshipped his grandfather. He then enquired if the evil portents predicted by wise men have ended with the death of Shishupal. However, Sage Vyas replied that much of the sorrows and sufferings were in store for the remaining 13 years. The portents indicate the annihilation of the Kshatriya race. The catastrophe would emanate from the enmity between Pandavas and their Kaurava cousins. None can change destiny but remain vigilant and righteous in conduct. After blessing the Pandavas, Sage Vyas left. Yudhishthir was extremely upset, and he lost interest in emperorship, but his brothers tried to uplift his morale. Yudhishthir then vowed that during the next 13 years he would never speak any harsh words to his cousins.

CHAPTER 10

Duryodhana's jealousy and conspiracy to entice Yudhishthir to the rigged game of dice

While Yudhishthir was extremely cautious to avoid any quarrel with Kauravas, Duryodhana was burning with jealousy thinking about the prosperity of Pandavas witnessed by him during the Rajasuya Yajna. He saw unprecedented wealth, that matchless assembly hall of Yudhishthir, which was studded with gems and jewels, and having crystal doors. He had seen hundreds of powerful kings happy at becoming the allies of Pandavas. This gave unbearable grief to Duryodhana. Sighing with sorrow, he gave expression to his feelings before Shakuni. Shakuni, however, tried to console Duryodhana saying that he himself also possessed all the wealth and fortune of the world and that he should not get jealous of his own cousins who had earned their fortune with their own efforts and without causing any injury to others. He also added that when Drona, Karna, Bhishma were by his side, he should not get disappointed.

Duryodhana, on the other hand, was burning with extreme jealousy; therefore, he replied that with such powerful heroes on their side why should not they wage war and drive Pandavas out of their kingdom. Shakuni, at that time, replied that he knew a method of driving the Pandavas out of Indraprastha without waging war. On being prodded by Duryodhana to reveal his plan, Shakuni replied that Yudhishthir was fond of playing the game of dice but was ignorant of its tricks. If

he is invited to play the game in Hastinapur, he will come following the tradition of Kshatriyas. Shakuni, who knew the skills of the game of dice, would play on behalf of Duryodhana; thus, Yudhishthir would be made to lose his kingdom in the game of dice.

Duryodhana and Shakuni went to Dhritarashtra and tried to persuade him to invite Yudhishthir to the game of dice. Shakuni pleaded that Duryodhana was suffering from unbearable sorrow and that something needed to be done to relieve him from his mounting grief. Dhritarashtra hugged Duryodhana and said that he had inherited the kingdom, had been given the best of education and training. He was surrounded by all kinds of pleasures, and even then, why should he be sunk in sorrow? Duryodhana replied with ruthless frankness saying that his envy and hatred of Pandavas was drowning him in depression. He talked about the great prosperity of Pandavas in their kingdom, and that he would rather lose all his wealth than endure the greater prosperity being enjoyed by Pandavas.

Dhritarashtra tried to advise Duryodhana saying that he should not be so jealous of Pandavas as they were his cousins and they had earned their wealth with their own efforts. In fact, Yudhishthir's prosperity should be considered as the prosperity of the Kuru race. Burning with unbearable jealousy, Duryodhana however, even humiliated his own father saying that he had no political wisdom. Contentment is not a virtue for Kshatriya kings, who should continuously seek victory. Shakuni then intervened and revealed his perfect plan of depriving Pandavas of their kingdom without shedding a drop of blood. Dhritarashtra was not convinced, and he wanted to consult Vidur, but Duryodhana opposed this idea. Shakuni and Duryodhana went on persuading Dhritarashtra to accept their plan saying that it was better to act in time instead of waiting as Pandavas might become even more powerful with the passage of time. Shakuni finally said that Dhritarashtra should only extend an invitation to Yudhishthir and rest should be left to him.

Out-witted and fatigued, Dhritarashtra finally gave in and called Vidur to go and invite Pandavas to the game of dice. He also ordered the construction of an exquisite hall of games. Vidur tried to dissuade, saying that this had the potential of ruining their entire race. Dhritarashtra, however, told Vidur that he did not mind the destruction if Duryodhana won the game, but if fortune went against Kauravas, then destiny had to be accepted as all-powerful. Consequently, Vidur went to invite Yudhishthir as per the orders of Dhritarashtra. The Kuru king again tried to dissuade Duryodhana from playing the game of dice as he was blessed with all the pleasures and prosperity and did not need anything more. Duryodhana, however, retorted that a true Kshatriya must feel jealous of his enemy's prosperity and that he was much pained at watching that Pandavas had become more affluent than him.

Duryodhana thereafter lamented, recollecting, again and again, the details of wealth owned by Pandavas. He lamented Pandavas having an assembly hall of which there was no match on earth or in heaven. After that, he recollected with grief the way Bhima laughed at him when he mistook a water lake as crystal floor. Then he bewailed recollecting the most precious and costly tributes brought by kings from distant lands, which included gems, jewels, horses, carpets, vehicles, weapons and chariots *etc.* Duryodhana went on to bemoan the grandeur with which Yudhishthir was installed as the Emperor during Rajasuya Yajna. The great rishis from all over were sprinkling sacred water; powerful Satyaki held the umbrella, most effulgent Arjun and Bhima were holding fans whereas Nakul and Sahadev held exquisite *chamar(s)* in their hands. Shri Krishna himself bathed Yudhishthir after the conclusion of the sacrifice. Duryodhana added that after seeing such prosperity of Yudhishthir, he was so upset that he was losing the will to live. At that time, Dhritarashtra consoled Duryodhana saying that his wealth was equal to that of Pandavas, and he had an even, more significant number of friends and allies. Getting consumed with jealousy after looking at the wealth of one's own innocent cousins was a great sin.

Vidur reached Indraprastha, presented himself before Yudhishthir, and then extended the invitation on behalf of Dhritarashtra to the game of dice, for which a beautiful, glamorous hall had been constructed. Yudhishthir then tried to seek the advice of Vidur on whether he should go for the wagering game as that could create quarrels amongst Kshatriyas. Vidur replied that everyone knew that the game of dice was the root of many evils and that he did his best to oppose the idea and now was for Yudhishthir to take the decision. Despite such a clear warning by Vidur, Yudhishthir went with his brothers and retinue to play the game of dice in Hastinapur. The question arises why did wise Yudhishthir agree to go to Hastinapur to play the game of dice? The first reason could be that impelled by his own instinct of gambling; he decided to follow the Kshatriya tradition of not refusing the invitation to the game of dice. The second reason could be that the invitation was sent by Dhritarashtra, which he did not want to refuse. To my mind, none of these justifications is good enough. He was compelled by his own destiny and misfortune, which had now turned against him.

On reaching Hastinapur, Pandavas were rested in a magnificent palace. The next morning, they went to the newly constructed hall of games. Shakuni invited Yudhishthir to the game of dice. Initially, he resisted, but a part of him was feeling weak due to his own addiction to gambling. On the other hand, Shakuni acted very cleverly and succeeded in persuading him to play the game of dice. Yudhishthir enquired who would be playing against him. Duryodhana replied that he would fix the stakes, whereas Shakuni would cast the dice on his behalf. With some initial

reluctance, Yudhishthir agreed. In that hall of games sat Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Dhritarashtra feeling rather sad, as they knew that the game would lead to some disaster.

Shakuni was in a hurry to start the game and throw the dice which had been trained to obey him. The game started; at first, they wagered jewels, gold, silver, and other valuables. Yudhishthir lost all of these. Then he lost chariots, elephants and horses. After that, Yudhishthir wagered armies and servants; he lost all of these. The dice thrown by Shakuni was so well-trained that it seemed to obey his command every time, and Yudhishthir was thus playing a fixed match throughout the game. Even then, Yudhishthir did not quit the game. Vidur at that time addressed Dhritarashtra in the open assembly and advised him to stop the game forthwith, which would lead to the destruction of the Kuru race. Infuriated Duryodhana humiliated Vidur in front of that assembly, and Dhritarashtra maintained silence.

Who could believe that Yudhishthir could become so reckless as to offer in wager his own illustrious and obedient brothers and that also after knowing fully well what Shakuni was capable of doing with the dice? But dark clouds of misfortune and adversity carried Yudhishthir on and on. Finally, he put on stake his own brothers one by one and lost them all. Finally, he offered himself, and Shakuni won emperor Yudhishthir also in that game of dice. Then Shakuni stood up in the hall of games and announced one by one naming each Pandava that he had become his slave. After that, Shakuni alone turned to Yudhishthir and whispered in his ear that he still had Draupadi to put on stake and could free himself as well by winning. The entire assembly was stunned when Yudhishthir announced that he put Draupadi on stake. Shakuni cast the dice and announced that he had won. Duryodhana, his brothers, and Karna shouted with jubilation. Destiny is indeed powerful; Yudhishthir, who was an emperor a few days back, was sitting in that Kuru assembly as a slave! It seems that he was destined to become the emperor only for a few days and then lose that emperorship in the rigged game of dice and suffer the forest life for 12 years!

CHAPTER 11

Draupadi is violated and disgraced before the Assembly of Kurus

Duryodhana asked Vidur to go and fetch Panchali immediately as she had also become their slave. Vidur reprimanded Duryodhana and then turning towards the assembly he said, after having lost his own freedom and all his rights, Yudhishthir had no authority to put on stake Draupadi. He also warned Kauravas that they were inviting their own ruin by resorting to such immoral and unfair practices. Presuming that Vidur would not obey his command, Duryodhana sent his charioteer Prathikarman to Draupadi. He went and narrated all the details about Yudhishthir's losses in the game of dice and told that from now onwards, Draupadi belonged to Duryodhana. Although the news was heart-breaking and soul-killing, Draupadi regained her fortitude and asked Prathikarman to go and enquire in the open assembly if Yudhishthir had first lost himself or his wife. Prathikarman went to the assembly and asked the question, but Yudhishthir remained speechless. Then Duryodhana asked Prathikarman to go and ask Panchali to come to the assembly and ask her question. However, Draupadi insisted that the charioteer must first bring the answer from Yudhishthir.

Prathikarman came back. Enraged Duryodhana then sent Dushasana to fetch Draupadi to the hall of games. He went and ordered her to come with him to the assembly. Looking at his determination, and the prospect of unbearable humiliation, Panchali rose and ran towards the inner apartments of Gandhari. Dushasana pounced at her, caught her by the hair, and dragged her to the assembly. Draupadi

pleaded that she was in her season and should not be dragged to the assembly hall before the elders in semi-nude condition. Dushasana replied most cruelly and brutally that now she was their slave, and they were to decide if she were to be paraded nude or dragged attired in one cloth. Dushasana dragged Draupadi in that semi-nude condition before the assembly. At that time, Draupadi very rightly expected that the elders would come to her rescue, but they all remained silent.

One shudders with repugnance while narrating this part of the story. Dushasana dragged semi-covered Draupadi before the assembly holding her by the hair. She was pleading before the elders to stop such vicious transgression of morality, but Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarashtra, and Kripacharya all remained silent! Did not they lose any claim to morality, dharma, and greatness then and there? Could the elders commit any greater sin than this anywhere and at any time? Nowhere, and in no yuga, not even in Kaliyuga, moral values had been brought down so low by the so-called respectable elders! Should not Yudhishthir also be divested of his title of Dharmaraj after committing such a heinous crime? Helpless Draupadi cast a glance which was full of modesty and anger on her five husbands, and they all were intensely pained but sat still. Is morality so week and so one-sided that husbands known as the best warriors could stake their wife in gambling and after that not even come to her rescue? During that time of extreme adversity, only Bhima had a little bit of self-esteem left in him. He tried to remonstrate Yudhishthir, saying that even professional gamblers do not stake their wives and, for this despicable, he should burn his (Yudhishthir's) hands. Arjun intervened to remind Bhima that he should not transgress his elder brother, but Bhima retorted that if he had known what Yudhishthir was up to, he would have burnt his arms much earlier. Could the Pandavas be excused for such atrocious conduct? Dushasana dragged Draupadi with greater cruelty while Duryodhana and Karna applauded him.

Sobbing princess Draupadi, suffering from unprecedented humiliation in front of the open assembly, kept on asking her questions. She requested the Kuru elders to clarify if she was a slave woman? Could Yudhishthir, who had already lost himself put her on the stake in the game of dice? Could it be concluded that he had staked her voluntarily when he, being unskilled, was made to play the game of dice with wicked and deceitful gamblers?

The Kuru elders were sitting silent shamelessly, not even attempting to answer her questions. Seeing the Panchala princess distressed beyond a limit, Vikarna, third son of Dhritarashtra, stood up and asked the elders to answer Draupadi's questions, but they all maintained silence. Then he himself proceeded to give the answer saying that Draupadi was the common wife of all five Pandava brothers. Having first lost himself, Yudhishthir offered Draupadi as stake and that also on

being prompted by Shakuni. Therefore, it has to be concluded that she had not been won. Karna rebuked Vikarna, and Duryodhana tried to shut him up. At that time, Duryodhana directed Dushasana to take off the clothes of all Pandava brothers and that of Draupadi. All five Pandava brothers threw off their upper garments, leaving Draupadi totally helpless. In that hour of gross misfortune, Draupadi remembered Lord Krishna, also known as Vishnu, Hari, and Narayan, from the core of her heart and prayed to him for saving her honour.

Miracles are known to have happened sometimes. It appears that a great miracle had happened at that time also. Lord Krishna as Vishnu Hari covered Draupadi with many cloths. As Dushasana dragged one cloth, another one of the same kind appeared and covered her. As a consequence, hundreds and hundreds of cloths appeared at that time to keep Draupadi covered. The author was wondering what could be the scientific explanation of such a miracle! Well, then it has to be admitted that miracles do happen sometimes. Humans have believed in such phenomenon even in modern times, e.g. miracles attributed to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Shri Satya Sai Baba, Mother Teressa; they are believed to have performed many miracles in modern times. Many cancer patients granted only two months by a doctor have survived and lived happily for several years after the blessings of an evolved soul.

With a prayer on her lips, Draupadi was sobbing all the time. Watching this most heinous crime being committed in that assembly of so-called nobles, Bhima stood up in rage. He took an oath that he would one day tear the breast of Dushasana and drink his blood in the battlefield. At that time, everyone present in the assembly applauded Bhima and criticized Dhritarashtra.

A short while later, Vidur stood up and addressed all those so-called great men, who at that time were all disgraceful and reprehensible, including Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Dhritarashtra. Vidura got up and lamented that a humiliated Draupadi, crying piteously, had not got an answer from any of the elders. He said that she had put up a question, on whether she could be put on stake by somebody, who had already lost himself; but, still, the elders continued to sit in silence shamelessly watching her dragged and disrobed. On being pulled with even greater force by Dushasana, Draupadi sat down sobbing and asked the Kuru elders whether she was a servant woman or not. Bhishma Pitamah, who wanted to live comfortably in the Kuru kingdom as a respected Elder and had probably lost his objectivity and wisdom at that time, said that he was unable to answer her question with any certainty and let Yudhishthir answer that question. Yudhishthir had lost all his sense as well as wits and was sitting stupefied and speechless.

In that royal assembly of the ignoble at that time, Vidur, born of a maid-servant, was the only noble person who could speak for dharma and uphold righteousness.

Vikarna, younger son of Dhritarashtra, alone had the guts to protest such a humiliating treatment meted out to Draupadi when she had committed no crime and had not even been won during the game of dice. However, neither the perpetrators of the heinous crime nor the so-called respectable elders in that assembly were willing to listen to Vidur's sound advice, Vikarna's protest or Draupadi's entreaties.

Duryodhana and Karna at that time crossed all limits of wickedness. Karna asked Draupadi to go to the servant quarters of Duryodhana, whereas Duryodhana showed his bare right thigh to Draupadi, asking her to come and sit in his lap. With his eyes gone blood red in anger, Bhima took another oath, that he would break that thigh of Duryodhana in battle.

पितृभिः सह सालोक्यं मा स्म गच्छेद् वृकोदरः।
यद्येतमूरूं गद्या न भिन्द्यां ते महाहवे ॥ सभा पर्व, 2/71/14 ॥

Meaning: *Raging with anger, Bhima at that time took a pledge and told Duryodhana* that if he did not break his thigh with a mace in a battle, he should never achieve those highest regions where his ancestors had gone.

Just at that time, jackals started crying, and asses started braying around the palace of Kurus. On learning about the details, Gandhari felt extremely anguished, and she rebuked Dhritarashtra, who started consoling Panchali and offered her to ask for a boon. Draupadi then asked for one boon that let Yudhishthir be freed from slavery. After granting her that boon, Dhritarashtra offered to grant her a second boon. She immediately asked that let Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahadev also be free from slavery along with their bows, arrows, and chariots. Dhritarashtra granted that second boon also and offered a third one. However, Draupadi said that she did not deserve to be granted a third boon, adding that her husbands were now free and they would now achieve their prosperity on their own through their righteous deeds.

Freed from slavery on account of Draupadi's ingenuity, Yudhishthir bowed before Dhritarashtra and sought his directions. Dhritarashtra blessed him and said that he should go and rule over his kingdom of Indraprastha with the wealth kept at his command. The calamity invited by Yudhishthir was thus sent back by that wise Draupadi, who appeared to be the only sane and brave person in that assembly of immoral, irresponsible hypocrites at that time. At that time, Dhritarashtra also advised Yudhishthir to forget all acts of hostility and harshness of Duryodhana and Dushasana and remember only the goodness of Gandhari. Pandavas were bewildered and stunned at this sudden release from calamity. After that, accompanied by Draupadi, all five Pandava brothers ascended their chariots, wielding the weapons they all left for Indraprastha.

After Yudhishthir and his brothers departed taking Draupadi along, there was a vicious and angry discussion amongst Duryodhana, Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni. They went to Dhritarashtra and upbraided him for frustrating their well laid out plans of ruining the enemy and that also when they were on the verge of success. Duryodhana reproached Dhritarashtra quoting Brihaspati that adopting all kinds of fair and unfair means was justified when these are used for the destruction of a formidable enemy. One needs to take a pause here and add that for Duryodhana, his Pandava cousins were enemies, but for Dhritrashtra, they were like his own children. However, he was so fond of his son Duryodhana that in order to make him happier, he did not mind causing harm to the guileless Pandavas, who looked upon him as their father.

Duryodhana wanted that Pandavas should be called back and asked to resume the game of dice so that they could be sent to twelve years of exile and 13th year of incognito existence in some populated country. When Dhritarashtra appeared to be agreeing, greatly anguished Gandhari intervened to say that the counsel of wicked Duryodhana should not be accepted and that it was time for sending sinful Duryodhana to the forest or even to the other world. She expressed the fear that otherwise he would become the cause of the destruction of the entire Kuru race by pushing noble and peace-loving Pandavas to the brink. Dhritarashtra, however, had decided to please his vicious son; therefore, he ignored Gandhari's advice saying, "If the time for the destruction of our race has come, let it take place without any hindrance. I cannot prevent it". Just at that time, Dhritarashtra commanded Prathikarman to go and call back Yudhishthir, saying that the king was inviting him to play the game of dice again.

Prathikarman went and invited Yudhishthir to come and again play the game of dice. The most shocking part of the story is that Yudhishthir again accepted the invitation saying that he could not ignore the command of the old king and could not violate the custom of the Kshatriyas never to refuse an invitation to the game of dice. It has very appropriately been said that when misfortune and destruction are at hand, then evil appears to be good, whereas good appears to be improper, and a man's mind is overwhelmed with ideas that take him to the path of destruction. Vaishampayan, at this point in time, added that there never was and never will be a living deer of gold, yet Sita could persuade Shri Ram to go behind one and in the process got abducted by Ravana.

What else could one say at Yudhishthir agreeing to enter the same assembly hall to play the game of dice in which he, his brothers, his wife had been humiliated in such a wicked and vicious manner only a day earlier? While indulging in such irresponsible repugnant behaviour of playing the game of dice again, Yudhishthir

neither sought the permission of his mother Kunti, nor of Vidur. After knowing about this kind of conduct, the conscience of any responsible person refuses to accept Yudhishthir as Dharmaraj because his conduct was extremely immoral, reprehensible as well as reckless.

Quite shamelessly, Yudhishthir sat down to play the game of Dice again. Shakuni then announced the stake that if Kauravas lost, then they would go to the forest attired in deerskins and pass the thirteenth year incognito in some inhabited area. If recognized, they would have to return to exile for another twelve years. If, on the other hand, Yudhishthir was defeated, all the five Pandavas, along with Draupadi, would live in the forests for twelve years and spend the thirteenth year in disguise. If recognized, they would have to go back to exile for twelve years again. On the expiry of the 13th year, each party was to have his respective kingdom surrendered to the other (Sabha Parva: 2/76/12-14) –

त्रयोदशे च निर्वृत्ते पुनरेव यथोचितम् ।
स्वराज्यं प्रतिपत्तव्यमितरैरथवेतरैः ।। सभा पर्व, 2/76/14 ।।

Meaning: Shakuni at that time, while giving the details of the wager to Yudhishthir, concluded by saying that after coming back on the expiry of the thirteenth year, whether we (Kuru princes) or you (Pandava brothers) shall handover to each other their respective kingdoms.

Yudhishthir accepted the stake, Shakuni cast the dice and announced that he had won. After that the vanquished sons of Kunti attired themselves in deerskins and an upper garment. Dushasana and Karna again passed some lewd and crude remarks against Draupadi saying that her husbands were impotent and unable to protect her honour and that she should abandon them and select one of the Kurus as her husband. Enraged Bhima again repeated his vow that he would kill Dushasana and drink his blood in a fierce war. He also repeated that he would kill Duryodhana and break that thigh, displaying which he had humiliated Draupadi in open assembly. Bhima at that time also announced that Arjun would slay Karna, and Sahadev would kill Shakuni in the war, which would inevitably be fought (2/77/26-29).

CHAPTER 12

Pandavas leave for twelve years of exile and thirteenth year of living incognito

Yudhishthir went to bid farewell to the elders like Grandsire Bhishma, Drona, and Kripa but shamelessly they sat without speaking a word and refusing to defend dharma for the sake of their own leisure and comfort, provided to them by Dhritrashtra and Duryodhana. They were not protecting any Dharma at that time. Vidur, however, felt devastated and grief-stricken. While showering his blessings on Pandavas, he said that their mother Kunti would live in his house as an honoured guest during the next 13 years. He then tried to say some encouraging words that good days would come back as they all remain united through thick and thin. He added that Yudhishthir was ever devoted to righteousness, Arjun was ever victorious, Bhima possessed the greatest strength, most handsome Nakul was the gatherer of wealth whereas Sahadev was a great administrator. Vidura then advised them to learn giving charity from Kubera, forbearance from Earth, energy from the Sun, and strength from the winds.

Deeply anguished, Kunti then came out to bid farewell to her sons. She then lamented her coming to Hastinapur from the mountains of Shatshringa after the death of Pandu. She admired the great qualities possessed by all her sons and lamented about the adversities they had to go through during all their lives. None of the Kuru elders like Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, Drona, and Kripa ever tried to stand up for them.

From deep inside, Dhritarashtra still wanted to be reassured if Pandavas had left for the forest; leaving both the kingdoms for being ruled over by Duryodhana. He called Vidura aside and asked him to narrate how the Pandavas proceeded to the forest. Vidura replied that all the five Pandavas, dressed in deerskin, moved towards the forest. Yudhishthir had his face covered with cloth, Bhima went with eyes lowered, Arjun proceeded scattering sand around, Nakul and Sahadev besmeared their bodies with dust. Draupadi followed them, covering her face with her dishevelled hair and shedding tears. While departing, she cursed the wives of Kuru princes that, after 14 years, they would all enter Hastinapur sobbing, having their faces covered with uncombed hair, on losing their husbands, sons, and brothers. Dhaumya, the priest, accompanied them, singing hymns from Sama Ved. Vidur also added that at this unfortunate departure of sons of Pandu from Hastinapur, the earth began to tremble, meteors began to fall, and Rahu came to devour the Sun (Sabha Parva, 2/80/29).

राहुरग्रसदादित्यमपर्वणि विशाम्पते।

उल्का चाप्यपसव्येन पुरं कृत्वा व्यशीर्यत ।। सभा पर्व, 2/80/29

Meaning: When Pandavas were departing to go to the forest, Rahu came to devour the Sun, although it was not the day marked for the eclipse. Meteors began to fall; they left, keeping the city to their right.

For the reasons given in the box below, it has been concluded that this eclipse could be observed on 15th December, 3153 BCE, (01:42 hrs) from Hastinapur; Stellarium sky shot is given below -

Solar Eclipse on 15th December, 3153 BCE, (01:42 hrs), from Hastinapur (29° N, 77° E)

Box 1

On which date was this eclipse observed? Since comprehensive planetary positions have not been given, it had to be decided which span of dates should be considered for determining the date and time of this eclipse. Vana Parva of Mahabharat reveals that in Mahabharat days, asterisms were being counted from Rohini, as equinox was on that (Vana Parva / 230 / 8,10). Astronomically, there is the precession of equinox by one degree in 72 years. Today, Spring equinox is in the 3rd quarter of Purva Bhadrapad Asterism; thus, the equinox has moved by more than 5.25 nakshatras (Krittika, Bharani, Asvini, Revati, and Uttara Bhadrapada) since this reference in Mahabharat. This means that more than 5040 years (960 X 5.25) have passed. This took our research period for dating of Mahabharat references to 3500 BCE – 3000 BCE. Then, carefully observing the sky using Planetarium and Stellarium, it was concluded that this eclipse was observed on 15th December, 3153 BCE.

It is also considered as exclusive and more accurate because it occurred more than 14 years before the sky view observed on 14th January, 3138 BCE, i.e. at the time of occurrence of Winter Solstice on Magh Shukla Saptami. The next day on Magh Shukla Ashtami was Bhishma's demise, which happened on the 68th day after the beginning of Mahabharat war. As per the astronomical dates of Mahabharat war, displayed in later chapters of this book, Mahabharat War had begun on 8th November, 3139 BCE, and this eclipse was seen just 14 years before the beginning of Mahabharat war in December 3153 BCE.

This solar eclipse of 15th December, 3153 BCE, is worth taking into account because it was observed approximately 14 years before the beginning of Mahabharat war on 8th November, 3139 BCE. Lunar eclipse observable on 26th September, 3139 BCE, at the beginning of Kartik month and solar eclipse observable on 11th October, 3139 BCE, on Kartik Amavasya, perfectly match with the references in Mahabharat. Further, all planetary positions narrated in Mahabharat exactly match the sky view observed on 10th October, 3139 BCE, just a day before the solar eclipse in Kartik month of 3139 BCE. Therefore, this solar eclipse observable on 15th December, 3153 BCE, makes the beginning of astronomical references for which sky views could be generated sequentially. We are all aware that the war started after Pandavas had completed 13 years of exile, and all efforts to prevent the war in the 14th year had failed. All these and many other sequential sky views have been depicted and explained in succeeding chapters. Full details are also available in Appendix 3.

In response to further questions from Dhritarashtra, Vidur replied that citizens of Hastinapur were most unhappy; they were cursing wicked Kuru princes for driving away the virtuous sons of Pandu by making use of unfair means. Jackals and vultures were shrieking, giving rise to fearful portents of the impending destruction of the Kuru race. Celestial sage Narad appeared at that time and predicted the extinction of the Kuru race after 14th years. On hearing this prediction, Duryodhana, Karna, and Shakuni went to Drona in order to get the reassurance of support in the eventuality of war against the Pandavas. Drona replied that he believed that Pandavas had a divine origin and were virtuous, but he assured his unstinted support to the sons of Dhritarashtra, no matter what crimes and sins they committed! Dhritarashtra got extremely worried thinking about the revenge of Pandavas after 14 years. Sanjay, at that time, reminded Dhritarashtra how any honourable man could forget the most despicable treatment meted out to Draupadi in the assembly hall during the game of dice. Gandhari was crying for the treatment meted out to her, a daughter-in-law of Kurus, but that selfish old king was still only worried if his sons could survive the curses of righteous and pious Draupadi.

Down thousands of years, we have been hearing and reading praises of Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, extolling their righteousness and greatness. However, did they justify the praises heaped on them? Bhishma had taken two vows – one, to relinquish his right to the throne and second to observe celibacy (brahmacharya) for a lifetime (Adi Parva/100/95-96). He did this to make his father Shantanu happier. It is true that he scrupulously followed these two vows, but is that the sum total of morality and righteousness? He was very well aware that after the death of Pandu, Yudhishthir was the true and lawful Crown Prince of Kuru Kingdom, yet he silently watched his persecution at the hands of Duryodhana supported by Dhritrashtra. He even remained silent when a conspiracy was hatched to kill all the Pandavas in the fire of Wax Palace in Varnavat.

When the information reached that the Pandavas had survived the fire in the wax palace and that they were still alive and that Arjun had won the hand of Draupadi, a backward forest area named Khandavaprastha was given to Pandavas in the name of half of Kuru kingdom. Bhishma watched this injustice silently. However, Pandavas accepted even that in the interest of peace. There was no such oath taken by Bhishma, which could prevent him from either asking for the installation of Yudhishthir as the crown prince at Hastinapur or going with the Pandavas to Khandavaprastha? The answer is clear: it was the comfort, luxury and wealth provided by Duryodhana and Dhritarashtra! Bhishma was fully aware that Yudhishthir was legally entitled to rule over Kuru kingdom, yet he went on giving silent support to all kinds of conspiracies hatched against him by Duryodhana and his accomplices. He, in fact by implication gave assurance to Kuru princes that they may indulge in any number of immoral, and unethical practices but he would fight on their behalf during any war and thus was responsible for paving the way for Mahabharat war. All moral values and ethical practices were thrown to the winds when he became a witness to his own granddaughter-in-law being dragged by the hair and disrobed in open assembly. Being merely brave and victorious is not a quality worth admiring and emulating, especially when it is entirely devoid of morality.

Look at Drona! Besides being a learned Brahman, he was a great warrior who could boast of remaining unwinnable. He had been employed by Dhritarashtra and Bhishma to teach the Pandava and Kaurava princes. Arjun was Drona's best student; he won half of the Panchal kingdom of Drupada and handed it over to him as Guru Dakshina. Drona was aware that the Kuru kingdom actually belonged to Yudhishthir, yet he supported and silently witnessed all the unethical and sinful deeds of Duryodhana. He dared to justify all his sinful actions by taking the high moral ground that he was eating Kaurava's salt. Is it not the duty of the Preceptor to ensure ethical conduct of his disciple? Can a Preceptor justify immorality on the

part of a disciple merely saying that he was eating the salt of that disciple? Can a Preceptor discriminate against his own disciples in such a blatant manner? Since, Arjun had presented half of the Panchal kingdom to Drona, where was the need to remain in the employment of Kauravas in Hastinapur and then feel morally bound to support all their wicked and sinful actions?

If Drona had put his foot down even after Draupadi had been dishonoured in open assembly, saying that he would not support Duryodhana if there was a war against Pandavas, possibly the war could have been averted. However, he assured Duryodhana his unstinted support in the eventuality of war against Pandavas even if Kauravas' acts were grossly unfair and sinful. Could one justify resorting to all kinds of immoral practices for saving one's job and luxurious lifestyle? What else could prevent Dronacharya of great prowess from supporting the Pandavas when the conspiracies were being hatched against them, and they were being cheated and deprived of their lawful rights and dues? The story of Kripacharya is quite similar to that of Drona. Therefore, should not a question be asked as to why men like Bhishma, Drona and Kripa go down in history as great men of virtuous or ethical conduct?

That selfish king Dhritarashtra, a great hypocrite as well, was still grieving, thinking what would happen to his vicious sons when Pandavas come back after 13 years of exile. At that time, he did not have any sympathy for the Pandavas, who were robbed of their wealth, kingdom, and honour through a conspiracy hatched by his vicious sons. On the other hand, Pandavas always respected Dhritrashtra as if he were their own father. At that time, Sanjay did some plain talking, saying that when destruction is at hand, evil appears to be good to a sinful mind. He added that in front of the entire Assembly, that deceitful player at dice, Duryodhana insulted virtuous Draupadi, trying to disrobe her. He added that her curses would surely annihilate Kuru princes. Sanjay then added that, bound by the tie of virtue, the Pandavas of great prowess silently left for 13 years of exile; in the 14th year, they would certainly take revenge. Nobody would be able to save the sinful Kuru princes at that time. Thousands of citizens of the Kuru kingdom followed Pandavas to the Kamyaka forest as they did not wish to be ruled over by wicked Duryodhana.

Wise and virtuous Vidura often advised Dhritarashtra to pull away his children from viciousness and encourage them to tread the path of virtue. He often used to praise the goodness of virtuous Pandavas and advised Dhritarashtra to amend the error and call back Yudhishthir from exile and then give his kingdom back to him. Dhritarashtra usually listened to him in gloomy silence, but one day he lost his patience. He told Vidur that he always took the side of Pandavas and that if he so

wished, he could leave Kuru kingdom and join the Pandavas in the forest. Vidur felt sad, thinking that the destruction of the Kuru kingdom was unavoidable. He quickly left in a chariot to go to the forest where Pandavas lived. However, Dhritrashtra felt a pang of remorse and sent Sanjay behind Vidura to call him back, seeking forgiveness for the thoughtless words uttered by an unhappy and worried father. Vidur had already reached the abode of Pandavas in the forest. Sanjay followed him and hurriedly reached the hermitage of Pandavas. He conveyed Dhritarashtra's message to Vidura, adding that the blind king would die due to remorse if Vidur did not return. Soft-hearted and virtuous Vidur was much moved; he came back to Hastinapur. Dhritarashtra embraced Vidur and differences between them got washed away in tears of mutual affection.

One day Eminent Sage Maitreya came to Hastinapur and expressed his shock and surprise at the treatment meted out to Draupadi in the presence of Bhishma and Dhritarashtra. He also advised Duryodhana to make peace with Pandavas and stop hurting those brave and virtuous warriors. Obstinate and foolish Duryodhana merely laughed with disdain, thumping his thighs. Maitreya felt hurt and cursed Duryodhana saying that his thighs would be broken by Bhima's mace and that he would die a shameful and painful death. A few days later, after hearing about the treatment meted out to Pandavas and Draupadi, Sage Vyas also came to Hastinapur. He advised Dhritarashtra to check the sinful and reprehensible behaviour of his son Duryodhana towards worthy Pandavas, but he also could not succeed.

CHAPTER 13

Lord Krishna said some comforting and reassuring words to Draupadi

Lord Krishna had not as yet returned to Dwarka from Indraprastha after Rajsuya Yajna; therefore, he was not aware of Pandava's banishment after the game of dice. On the other hand, angry over slaying of Shishupal by Shri Krishna, King Salva of Saubha had besieged Dwarka with a powerful army. In the absence of Shri Krishna, old Ugrasena made all possible efforts to protect the heavily fortified city of Dwarka. However, King Salva had so rigorously pushed the siege that the citizens of Dwarka suffered great privations. When Lord Krishna came back and saw Dwarka besieged in this manner, he was anguished as well as furious. He attacked and defeated King Salva; then only Shri Krishna could enter the city of Dwarka with his entourage.

Lord Krishna after that learnt about the events in Hastinapur, Yudhishthir losing in the fraudulent game of dice, Draupadi being dishonoured in front of entire Kuru Assembly, and Pandavas leaving for exile. Immediately thereafter he left for Kamyaka Forest, accompanied by heroes from Bhoja, Vrishni and Chedi tribes. Kamyaka Forest was situated on the western boundary of the Kuru Kingdom, on the banks of the Saraswati River. It lay to the west of the Kurukshetra plains. It contained within it a lake called the Kamyaka lake (Vana Parva: 3/12/1).

Shri Krishna and his associates were filled with righteous indignation on hearing about the events that had happened in the Kuru assembly. In a voice broken with

sobs, Draupadi narrated the manner in which the sons of Dhritarashtra dragged her to the Assembly when she was in her season and therefore was wearing a single garment. Shedding tears, she recounted the way they insulted her most outrageously and treated her as worse than a slave. She then lamented that neither the Kuru elders came to her rescue nor did her husbands protect her from the jeers and vulgar insults of those crooked ruffians. She then recollected that daughter of King Drupada, daughter-in-law of Emperor Pandu and wife of five renowned Pandava warriors was dragged in the assembly by the hair. Unable to say anything further, overpowered entirely by grief, she thereafter stood sobbing and trembling.

Shri Krishna was deeply moved and anguished. He asked Draupadi to wipe out her tears as all the grievous wrongs perpetrated on her would be amply avenged. He solemnly promised that her tormentors would be killed in a bloody battle and that she would become the Empress again. Draupadi's brother Dhrishtadhyumna was also present there at that time. He then explained how nemesis would overtake the Kauravas; he would kill Drona, Shikhandin would cause Bhishma's fall, and Bhima would take the lives of Duryodhana and Dushasana, whereas Arjun would slay Karna. After that, Lord Krishna took leave and came back to Dwarka. He took along with him his sister Subhadra, who was Arjun's wife, along with her son Abhimanyu. Dhrishtadhyumna went back to Panchal, taking with him five sons of Draupadi. The kings of Kaikeya and of Chedi, who had come to meet Pandavas, also left for their respective kingdoms.

After some time, all the Pandavas, led by Yudhishthir, went to **Dvaitavana** to live in that lonely forest for twelve years. They built their huts adjacent to a lake. At the end of the summer, the forest was full of Saal, palm, Mangos, Nipa, Kadamba, Sarja, Arjuna, Karnikara trees blooming with flowers (Vana parva/24/17). Paleobotanic evidence has revealed that at least some of these plants were growing in India about 5000 years back. During those days, monsoons were becoming weaker, and the weather was in the process of becoming drier than before. The relevant scientific details have been given with all the essential archaeobotanical evidence in the chapter written under the guidance of Dr Premendra Priyadarshi, entitled 'Archaeo-botanical Studies place Mahabharat around 3000 BC and establish an inseparable link between Harappan sites and references in Mahabharat'.

After settling down in Dvaita Forest, Pandavas used to go to the banks of charming Sarasvati River, and they saw many hermitages of pious souls on its banks (3/24/20). The sages and hermits welcomed the Pandavas. The old Sage Markandeya came to visit them in their hermitage and tried to console Pandavas by giving an example of Shri Ram who was a man of great prowess but lived in the forests for 14 years at the command of his father (3/25/10).

सहस्रनेत्रप्रतिमो महात्मा यमस्य नेता नमुचेश्च हन्ता ।
पितुर्निर्देशादनघः स्वधर्मं वासं वने दाशरथिश्चकार ।। वन पर्व, 3/25/10 ।।

Meaning: Sage Markandeya consoled Dhritarashtra saying that in ancient days, Shri Ram, son of Dashrath, was a virtuous soul of great prowess. He was like Indra himself; he was a ruler of Yama, who was the slayer of demon Namuchi. Even then he lived in the forest under orders from his father, considering that to be his duty/ dharma.

During their stay in that forest, Bhima and Draupadi often used to argue with Yudhishthir that righteous anger befitted a Kshatriya and that patience in the face of insults was unworthy of him. Yudhishthir, however, would firmly reply that they should abide by their promise of living in the forest for 12 years and that forbearance was the highest virtue of all. Bhima was blazing with impatience to attack and kill Duryodhana immediately and win back the kingdom. In his opinion, a brave Kshatriya must not live in the forest tamely and without making any effort to regain his kingdom. He would quote from scriptures which expect a Kshatriya to be enterprising and stern.

Bhima and Draupadi would repeatedly tell Yudhishthir that wicked sons of Dhritarashtra had snatched their kingdom using deceitful means and scriptures ordain that defeating and killing such deceitful enemies was the foremost duty of a Kshatriya. They used to get irritated with Yudhishthir's apathy and at his resolve to live in the forest like a lazy python. Then they would also remind Yudhishthir about incognito living in an inhabited area during the 13th year. Then they would ask Yudhishthir how could world's best bowman Arjun live incognito? How could exceptionally beautiful Draupadi walk unrecognized? How could the Himalayas be hidden under a handful of grass? They would repeatedly provoke Yudhishthir to grant permission so that they could kill Kuru princes without any further delay. Draupadi would repeatedly refer to scriptures that dishonour suffered by her at the hands of Duryodhana must be avenged forthwith and without any delay.

Yudhishthir would repeatedly say that they were living as was willed by the God Almighty. Draupadi could not understand the rationale behind this thinking because she sincerely believed that all the Pandavas were righteous and noble people; therefore, there was no justification for their living such a miserable life in the forests. If everything happened by the will of God, then why do the good people suffer? It appeared to her that only the powerful escape harm, not the righteous ones. Yudhishthir corrected her, saying "None should ever perform virtue with a desire to gain its fruits. Such a sinful trader of virtue will never reap the results. .... Do not doubt virtue because you do not see its results. Without a

doubt, the fruits of virtue will be manifest in time, as will the fruits of sin. The fruits of true virtue are eternal and indestructible".

Yudhishthir would also anxiously ponder over all the suggestions made by his brothers and Draupadi. Then he would also express his opinions saying several things like - Kurus had supporters like Bhishma, Karna, Drona and Ashwatthama. Duryodhana and his brothers were themselves great experts at warfare. Many kings and princes will support Duryodhana if any war takes place. Yudhishthir also said that Bhishma and Drona, even though they disliked Duryodhana, would take his side and would be prepared to sacrifice their lives for him in the battlefield. Karna was a brave and skilful fighter, well versed in the use of all kinds of weapons. The course of the war was unpredictable, and success was uncertain. Therefore, taking any steps in haste was highly avoidable. By putting forth such arguments, Yudhishthir could manage with great difficulty to restrain the impatience of his brothers.

A few years passed in the Dvaitavana forest in this manner. Then one day, Sage Vyas came to meet them. He took Yudhishthir aside and then advised that they should move to another forest as living very long at one place was neither safe nor desirable. Sage Vyas also informed Yudhishthir that time for their victory was coming nearer; therefore, he should send Arjun for the acquisition of celestial weapons from Rudra, Varuna, Kubera, and Yama. The learned Sage also imparted to the eldest Pandava the knowledge called Pratismriti, which was like success personified. Sage Vyas left, thereafter.

CHAPTER 14

Arjun acquired divine weapons from Lord Shiva and Lord Indra

Yudhishthir, then, called Arjun and shared his thoughts with him. He said that Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna, and Ashwatthama were great masters of the science of weaponry. They were all enriched, honoured, and gratified by Duryodhana; as a result, they would surely exert their might in his support in the battle. Therefore he advised Arjun to practice severe austerities and obtain celestial weapons from Indra. Arjun prepared himself to go to the Himalayas while hermits and sages showered their blessings. When Arjun went to bid farewell to Panchali, she said, "O mighty-armed Dhananjaya, O son of Kunti, let all that Kunti desired at your birth and all that you yourself have desired be accomplished" (3/37/24).

Arjun went through dense forests and then reached the mountain of Indrakila. There he met an old Brahman who enquired what he was looking for in that abode of ascetics and saints, dressed as a Kshatriya wielding weapons. Arjun bowed with respect and said that he had come to seek arms and weapons. Indra in the garb of that Brahman suggested why he did not seek the pleasures of the higher world. Arjun replied that he had come there leaving Draupadi and his own brothers behind and only wanted to acquire celestial weapons. Brahman then suggested that Arjun should worship and please Lord Shiva, who alone could give him some divine weapons. Brahman thereafter disappeared. Arjun went to the Himalayas and did penance in a forest to win the grace of Lord Shiva.

After a few days, Lord Shiva, accompanied by Parvathi, entered that forest in the guise of a hunter in pursuit of a game. The chase grew furious and a wild boar started charging towards Arjun. Arjun shot an arrow from his Gandiva into it exactly at the same moment when hunter Shiva transfixed an arrow into it from the Pinaka, his bow. Arjun shouted at the hunter why he had shot at the game he had aimed at. The hunter replied with disdain that Arjun had no business to stay in the forest which belonged to the hunters. He also added that it was his shaft that had killed the boar, and if Arjun thought differently, he was welcome to fight about it. Arjun immediately jumped and showered many arrows at the hunter but these had no effect on him. When Arjun had exhausted all his arrows, he attacked the hunter with his Gandiva. However, the hunter snatched the Gandiva from Arjun. Then Arjun attacked with his sword, which was broken into pieces by the hunter's adamantine frame. Worsted and defeated in this manner, Arjun meditated on Lord Shiva and then realized that actually, that the hunter was Lord Shiva himself.

Arjun fell at the feet of Lord Shiva and prayed for forgiveness. Lord Shiva forgave him and also gave his Gandiva back to Arjun, along with two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. He also bestowed on Arjun the marvellous Pashupata weapon, along with knowledge of holding, hurling and withdrawing it. Arjun's wounds were also healed with the affectionate divine touch from Lord Shiva. After that, Shiva advised Arjun to go to heaven. Arjun resumed his penance and received the blessings of Varuna, Kubera, and Yama, who blessed him with victory over his Kuru enemies. The king of celestials sent his charioteer Matali to bring Arjun to heaven. After having passed through several celestial regions, effulgent Arjun, at last, reached Amravati, the abode of Lord Indra.

Arjun saluted Lord Indra bending his head low, and Lord Indra seated Arjun in his lap with affection. Arjun received training in the use of several weapons from Gandharvas, and he also received Vajra from Indra. On being so advised by Indra, Arjun also learnt singing and dancing from Chitrasena. On the other hand in Kamyaka forest, Arjun's brothers as well as Draupadi remembered Arjun and waited for him anxiously every day. Draupadi said that in the absence of Arjun, Kamyaka neither looked secure nor charming to her; Bhima added that it was only due to the prowess of mighty-armed hero Arjun that they always considered their enemies vanquished. Nakula added that, without Arjun, he had lost his peace of mind, whereas Sahadev added that seeing Arjun's bed of grass empty, he could not bear the pain of separation from Arjun while living in that Kamyaka Forest.

Deeply anguished and worried about not getting any information about Arjun, Yudhishthir expressed his concern with his their priest Dhaumya. Dhaumya

described many forests, hermitages, and pilgrimage centres to Pandavas where they could go to relieve themselves from the pangs of separation from Arjun and also acquire great merit (3/87). He described **Naimish Aranya** adjacent to River Gomati, **Gaya** on the banks of sacred Ganga River, and **Prayag** situated on the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna.

After that, Dhaumya described Tirthas located in the Southern Region. These included hermitages located along Godavari River, Agastya Ashram, Ujjayant located in Saurashtra, and Dwarka which symbolises eternal virtue of Lord Krishna. Dhaumya added that in the Western region there were pilgrimage centres situated on the banks of River Narmada and a sacred lake known as **Pushkara**. Continuing with his narration of pilgrimage centres, Dhaumya described tirthas of the North. There were many sacred places along the Holy River Sarasvati and Drishadvati (3/90/3-12). These included Plakshavatarana and Palasaka. Then there were pilgrimages along Ganga like Gangadwara, Kankhala and Badri where sages worship Lord Vishnu, known as the Narayana.

When Dhaumya was talking to Yudhishthir, Sage Lomasha came there. After knowing about Yudhishthir's worry about Arjun, Lomasha described that he had met Arjun who had obtained great Pashupati weapon (also known as Brahmashira) from Lord Shiva. He also added that he had met Indra who had conveyed the message that Arjun would soon come back after having obtained the divine weapons and would remain matchless in a great battle. He also conveyed Arjun's message that Yudhishthir should visit tirthas accompanied by Lomasha. Therefore, he would go to visit pilgrimage centres accompanying him.

Clad in barks and skins, putting on armours and weapons, accompanied by Lomasha and Dhaumya, those heroic sons of Pandu along with Draupadi left for pilgrimage. They visited almost all the pilgrimage centres described by Narada and by Dhaumya. On the way, Sage Lomasha narrated the story of Pulastya Muni, the greatness of Sage Agastya, history of Jamdagni, and contribution of Suryavanshi rulers from Sagar to Bhagirath in increasing the water level of the sea by diverting Bhagirathi waters to the East. The Pandavas continued their journey watching different pilgrimage centres, and then they came to Prabhas, which was located on the sea coast and was adjacent to Dwarka. When Shri Krishna and Balaram learnt about Pandavas' arrival in Prabhas, they went to meet them there. Yudhishthir narrated the story of their struggles and troubles. He also told Lord Krishna about Arjun having gone to the abode of Indra to acquire divine weapons. Balaram at that time expressed his sorrow at the irony that noble and magnanimous Yudhishthir was miserable with the besmeared body, matted locks, bark garments,

whereas vicious and wicked Duryodhana was ruling over the entire earth after deceitfully robbing Yudhishthir of his throne.

Satyaki intervened to suggest that without waiting for Yudhishthir's orders, they should collect their armies and attack Duryodhana. After killing him and his adherents they should hand over the kingdom to Abhimanyu if Pandavas were unwilling to accept the same before the expiry of 13 years after the game of dice. Vasudeva Krishna responded by saying that even though the suggestion was noble, but Pandavas would not like to accept whatever they have not won with their own ability. When the period of exile is over, the kings of Panchala, Kekaya, Chedi and Dwarka should put together their forces and assist Yudhishthir in winning back his kingdom. Yudhishthir was pleased with this response from Shri Krishna. Then, Krishna and Balaram went back to Dwarka with their followers and Pandavas went ahead on their pilgrimage.

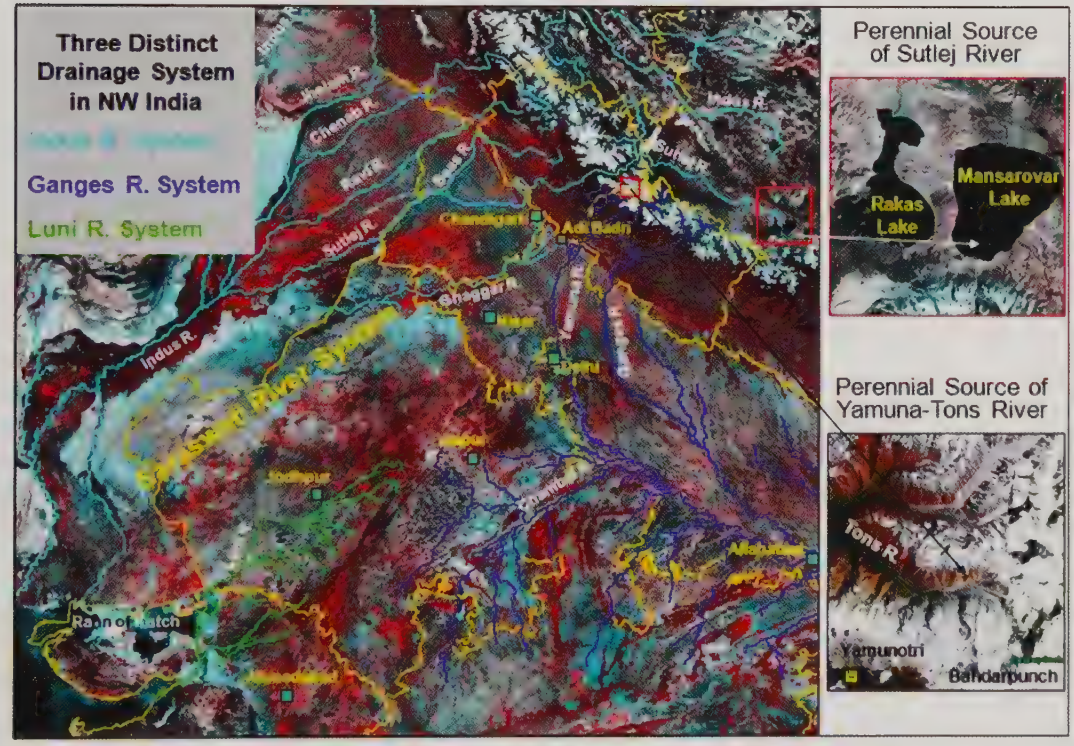
Bhima's anxiety and impatience about Arjun had by now become intolerable. He then suggested that Arjun should be immediately called back and without waiting for the expiry of 13 years, they should attack Duryodhana taking assistance of all friendly forces. All their sorrows and sufferings they owe to that mad game of dice. To dwell in the forests wearing matted locks and bark skin is not the duty of a Kshatriya. Bhima added that he was unable to wait anymore and that he wanted to kill Duryodhana, Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni immediately so that he could take revenge from them for such gross humiliation piled on Draupadi in open Assembly. Hearing these words, Yudhishthir embraced Bhima and assured him that just as the period of 13 years would be over, Bhima and Arjun would kill all of them. After all, a sinner could not escape unhurt forever.

Accompanied by Priest Dhaumya and Sage Lomasha, Pandavas went to the banks of many sacred rivers and visited several pilgrimage places. Graphic details of these places have been given in chapters 82-88, and 114 of Vana Parva. They went along River Sarasvati (modern Ghaggar) and then visited Plakshavatarana. After performing Sarasvata sacrifice and then bathing in that sacred river, they reached Drishadwati (modern Chautang), which was located in modern-day Haryana. After that, they reached the Yamuna and then went to Bhagirathi. From there, they went to Ganga. From Ganga, they went to River Sona, and after that to Vanshagulma, the originating point of both Sona and Narmada Rivers.

After that Sage Lomasha took Yudhishthir and his brothers to most sacred Naimish Aranya. From there they went to River Gomati. Then they went to Gaya and bathed in River Phalgu. After visiting Kaushiki (Kosi), they reached Ganga where it fell into the sea after dividing itself in more than a hundred streams. After that

accompanied by sages, Yudhishthir went along the sea coast and reached Kalinga and Vaitarni in modern-day Orissa. From there they travelled towards North-West and again reached the banks of most sacred River Sarasvati. Many of these sacred rivers, along which Pandava brothers went on pilgrimage, have still not dried up and are flowing in the same sequence. Let us have one look at the satellite image taken by ISRO, Jodhpur Centre.

Satellite image showing that important rivers mentioned in Mahabharat still flow in the same geographical sequence (Ghaggar represents Sarasvati and Drishadvati)



Sutlej, Sarasvati and Drishadvati (Ghaggar), Yamuna, Ganga and Gomati can be seen in clear geographic sequence matching that described in Mahabharat (After J.R. Sharma and B.K. Bhadra, ISRO, Jodhpur, 2012)

Pandavas went towards the Himalayas, traversing dense forests and mountains, but did not find peace of mind in the absence of Arjun. Then, during one of their journeys, they came across a terrible forest having a rugged and steep path. Yudhishthir felt that the forest would be extremely distressing for Draupadi and that he himself would go ahead accompanied by Sage Lomasha and Nakul. He also

suggested that Bhima and Sahadev should stay behind with Draupadi at Gangadvara. Bhima would not agree to such a suggestion saying that pain of separation from Arjun was already killing him and that he would not leave Yudhishthir unprotected in that forest infested by demons and wild animals. Bhima offered that he could carry Draupadi, and even Nakul and Sahadev, if needed. Draupadi, however, replied confidently that nobody needs to carry her; she would herself walk to cross that forest.

After that, Pandavas crossed several forests and mountains in the upper regions of Ganga. Going ahead they went to the regions of Kailash Mountain; Yudhishthir cautioned Bhima to take care of Draupadi, Nakula, and Sahadev as those areas were full of invisible beings. The route was tough; the journey was long, but they all practised austerities and asceticism, while climbing in the hope to meet Arjun. Thereafter, they reached the source of Alaknanda in Badri area. They worshipped the holy river and then proceeded towards Gandhamadan. After going a long way, they saw Draupadi almost fainting due to fatigue. Yudhishthir at that time repented that he had committed a great blunder by playing the game of dice; as a consequence of which the delicate hands and lotus-like feet of the princess of Panchal had become dark blue in colour. Priest Dhaumya tried to console Yudhishthir. Bhima at that time, remembered his son Ghatotkach, who was capable of ranging the skies and asked him to carry Draupadi and proceed along with them. Ghatotkach invited his demon friends, and they carried all the Pandavas from over the hills and forests. They then reached Mount Kailash and saw the charming hermitages of Nar and Narayan. The pious effulgent sages conferred their blessings on Pandavas. A balmy breeze with divine fragrance was blowing there, giving a lot of relief and pleasure to Pandavas.

Pandavas stayed in that region for about six days when, suddenly, one day the blowing wind brought a charming golden lotus with divine fragrance. Draupadi was thrilled to look at it, and she wanted Bhima to bring some more similar lotuses for her. Keen to please the lotus-eyed Panchali, Bhima proceeded in search of those flowers following the direction from where the fragrance was coming. He walked a long distance when a colossal animal looking like a monkey blocked his path. First, there was an exchange of haughty words, but finally, Bhima was guided to go along the stream to reach Sugandhika forest, wherein he would find the divine lotuses he had come to seek at that time.

Bhima reached the charming lake inside that forest, drank its water which was like ambrosia and after that plucked some delightful golden lotuses after defeating their guardian Yakshas. A little later, Ghatotkach brought anxious Yudhishthir and all other Pandavas to that lake. Bhima quickly presented these divine lotuses with

affection to Draupadi. With the permission of Kubera, Pandavas lived for a few days on the banks of that wonderful lake. Yudhishthir at that time recollected that they had visited many holy places, and had bathed in Sindhu, Ila, Sarasvati, Yamuna, Ganga and Narmada (3/156/8). After that, they all came back to the hermitage of Narayana. Yudhishthir thought that they would live there till the return of Arjun after five years of his departure to acquire the celestial weapons.

After walking some more distance, Pandavas reached near Meru Parvat. Then Dhaumya, taking Yudhishthir by his right hand and looking towards the East, asked everyone to worship the Sun rising above the Meru Mountain, which was the abode of Kubera and Indra. Then the very wise Dhaumya added that Sun always imparts life and motion to all living beings; it never rests and creates days and nights. Pandavas spent almost a month in that area waiting for Arjun all the time. Then, one day sky was suddenly illuminated, and Arjun descended from the chariot of Indra, driven by Matali. He first bowed down before Priest Dhaumya and then before Yudhishthir and thereafter before his elder brother Vrikodara. Nakul and Sahadev ran to greet him. After the departure of Matali, Arjun offered to Draupadi beautiful precious gems and ornaments presented to him by Indra. After that, Arjun narrated faithfully all the details of his earthly and celestial journey and how he had acquired those rare divine weapons and learnt the science of those weapons. A little later, Arjun assured Yudhishthir that he would surely be victorious and govern the earth as its emperor.

Ecstatic with joy, Yudhishthir repeatedly smelled the head of Arjun and hugged him. Arjun narrated in detail how he encountered several problems on the way and finally reached the abode of Lord Indra, who welcomed him as his own son. Remembering the calamities brought on them by Yudhishthir's addiction to the game of dice and the need to acquire divine weapons to defeat their enemies, Arjun acquired several weapons and learnt to make use of these and spent five years of his life in Indralok. He displayed each weapon and explained its use to Yudhishthir, adding that if those were not carefully preserved they would lead to the destruction of the three worlds. They lived happily for some more time in that marvellous heavenly region and then decided to come back to Dvaitavana. Sage Lomasha departed conveying his blessings to Pandavas. Unhappy at heart but driven by the call of duty, Pandavas started their journey back from celestial regions to earth. Pandava brothers were repeatedly reminding Yudhishthir about their duty to destroy their deceitful, vicious enemies. Finally, they reached the banks of Sarasvati and then arrived at Lake Dvaitavana in the 12th year of their exile. There they saw various kinds of trees and plants on the banks of River Sarasvati.

प्लाक्षाक्षरैहीतकवेतसाश्च तथा बदर्यः खदिराः शिरीषाः ।
बिल्वेङ्गुदाः पीलुशमीकरीराः सरस्वतीतीररुहा बभूवुः।। वन पर्व, 3/177/23।।

Meaning: In Dvaitavana on the banks of Sarasvati, they saw various kinds of trees including Plaksha, Badari, Bilva, Inguda, Khadira, Pilu, Rehitak, Shirisha, Khadira, Vetas and Shami.

Paleobotanical evidence has revealed that most of these plants were growing in India about 5000 years back. At that time, monsoons were becoming weaker, and the weather was in the process of becoming drier as compared to that of Ramayan era in 7000 BP. The relevant details have been given with all the important archaeo-botanical evidence in the chapter based on inputs received from Dr Premendra Priyadarshi, titled 'Archaeo-botanical Studies place Mahabharat around 3000 BCE and establish an inseparable link between Harappan sites and the references in Mahabharat'.

PLANTS OF DVAITA FOREST, NEAR SARASVATI RIVER IN KURUKSHETRA AREA, DESCRIBED IN VANA PARVA OF MAHABHARAT

Sr. No.	Sanskrit name of plant in Mahabharat	Botanical name	Common name Hindi / English	Adi Parva/ Sub-chapter / verse number
1.	Badari बदरी	Zizyphus mauritiana	Ber, Bora	III.177.23
2.	Bilva बिल्वा	Aegle marmelos	Bel, Bael	III.177.23
3.	Inguda इङ्गुद	Balanites roxburghii	Imli	III.177.23
4.	Khadira खदिर	Acacia catechu	Khair, Catechu, Katthha	III.177.23
5.	Pilu पीलु	Salvadora oleoides	Mustard Tree/ Meswak	III.177.23
6.	Plaksha प्लक्ष	Ficus religiosa	Kinshuk, Flame of Forest	III.177.23
7.	Rohitaka रौहीतक	*Aphanamixis polystachya*	Rohituka, Pithraj	III.177.23, III. 241.67
8.	Shirisha शिरीष	Albizzia lebbeck	Lebbek Tree, Flea Tree, Siras,Chichwa	III.177.23
9.	Vetas वेतस	Calamus rotang	Rattan Palm - kind of cane	III.177.23
10.	Shami शमी	Prosopis cineraria,	Khejri, Sangri, sami, sumri	III.177.23-24 IV.5.13

PICTURES OF SOME PLANTS OF DVAITA FOREST, NEAR SARASVATI RIVER IN KURUKSHETRA AREA, DESCRIBED IN VANA PARVA OF MAHABHARAT

Shami
(© www.jogindernursery.com)

Khadira
(©www. honeyfurforher.com)

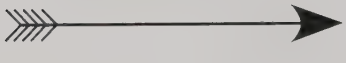
Plaksha
(@www.hindiastrologytips.com)

Pilu
(©https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki)

Rohitaka
(© www.flowersofindia.net/)

Shirisha
(© www. esakal.com)

CHAPTER 15



With celestial weapons and divine blessings, Pandavas came back to Dvaitavana

After that, they left for Dvaitavana Forest and received the hospitality of sages and hermits. Their dear friend Lord Krishna came to meet and greet them, accompanied by his wife, Satyabhama. Krishna eulogized Yudhishthir for his virtues like effulgence, truthfulness, selflessness, charity etc. Lord Krishna also reminded him about his addiction to gambling and consequent humiliation of Draupadi in the assembly. After that, Lord Krishna turned towards his cousin sister Draupadi and congratulated her for getting united with Arjun again, who had come back after acquiring divine weapons to kill her tormentors. When such conversations were going on, Sage Markandeya came there. All the Pandavas welcomed and greeted the great Sage, who had come there to render some valuable advice to Pandavas.

Yudhishthir enquired from Sage Markandeya, who was a storehouse of knowledge, as to why are men subjected to pleasure or pain and how is it that the consequences of good and evil acts of embodied beings follow them in next birth? Sage Markandeya explained that man, as is created by God Almighty, accumulates a store of good and evil deeds. When he leaves his perishable body and takes new birth, then all his good and evil deeds follow him and make his existence either pleasurable or painful. The truthful men, who practice austerities, remain dutiful

and merciful, and practice Yoga attain the celestial regions. After that, the Sage explained that God almighty is omnipresent and assumes human form for the preservation of virtue and morality. Markandeya pointed towards Lord Krishna and added that he was that Supreme Lord, the inconceivable Hari, and a mighty-armed Hero.

When Pandava brothers understood the philosophy of life from Sage Markandeya, Satyabhama, favourite queen of Lord Krishna, entered the hermitage and started talking to Draupadi. She wondered how Draupadi could win the affection of all five Pandu brothers, exercise control over them and how they all remained ever obedient to her? Draupadi replied that abandoning vanity and subduing desire, she served with devotion all the five Pandavas and all their wives. Sons of Pandu are mighty warriors blazing like Sun and handsome as the Moon and that she never felt attracted towards anyone else. The illustrious Yajnaseni added that she always took her food after serving her husbands, their other wives and attendants. She personally waited with food and clothes upon their most respected mother, Kunti. If a woman remains free from any wickedness or any deceit and serves her husband with sincerity, he would naturally obey her.

Madhusudan Keshav then got up to leave for Dwarka and called for Satyabhama. Before parting, Satyabhama blessed Draupadi saying that noble ladies of her disposition could not be subjected to suffering for long and that she would soon be the Empress again as Yudhishthir would rule over the earth again. Satyabhama also reassured Draupadi that all her five sons and Abhimanyu were living very happily in Dwarka. She also added that Subhadra was looking after all of them with great care and affection. They were all getting proper education and training and had become experts in the use of weapons. Before leaving, Lord Krishna again reassured and comforted Draupadi, and then started for Dwarka in his chariot driven by fast-moving horses.

Many Brahmans visited Pandavas when they were living in the Forest, and they observed that by now they had started looking weak and miserable. They expressed shock and surprise at the way in which Kuru princes enticed Yudhishthir to the rigged game of dice; the way in which Yudhishthir put on stake his wife Draupadi, princess of Panchal, unethically and irresponsibly. They were distressed on recollecting how Draupadi was dragged, disrobed and humiliated by the Kuru princes before the elders in Kuru assembly. One of those Brahmans went and met Dhritarashtra, and told him about the adversities faced by Pandavas in the forest. The old blind king started worrying that Pandavas' patience might have got exhausted and they would surely punish Duryodhana, Dushasana, Shakuni and Karna. Then he repented why he did not prevent his sons from treading the path of injustice and evil.

Arjun had, by now, returned from Heaven with divine weapons and only a craving for vengeance could tempt someone to come back to earth from heaven. On the other hand, Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni felt delighted on hearing about the miseries of Pandavas. They wanted to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the Pandavas living in such miserable conditions. Duryodhana said that he was dying to see with his own eyes unbearable sufferings of Draupadi, Bhima, and Arjun. Karna suggested that they could get the permission of Dhritarashtra if they tell him that they wanted to go to Dvaitavana for the annual stock-taking of their cows. Dhritarashtra was unwilling to grant permission as he knew that Pandavas were also living in that forest. However, they got his permission by resorting to articulate persuasion.

The Kauravas reached Dvaitavana with their armies, attendants, and servants. They inspected the herds of cow and took stock. Then they started enjoying dancing and hunting. Eventually, they reached a nice-looking pool of water located near the hermitage of Pandavas. Duryodhana ordered his armies and attendants to put up their camps there but the attendants of Chitrasena, king of Gandharvas, who was already encamping there, prevented Duryodhana's men from doing so. Duryodhana's men came back and reported all these facts to him. Duryodhana was furious; taking a large army along, he proceeded to defeat and destroy the Gandharvas. A tremendous and ferocious battle followed. Chitrasena and his army started using celestial weapons. Karna and all other Kaurava heroes lost their chariots and weapons; they all fled away from the battlefield to save their lives. However, Duryodhana and Dushasana remained on the battleground; Chitrasena's warriors soon captured them. They bound their legs and hands and took them as prisoners. Gandharvas blew their conch to announce their victory.

Some army men of Duryodhana ran towards Pandavas seeking protection. Bhima intervened to say that Duryodhana and his brothers had come there to gloat over their misery. In the process, Gandharvas had done a great favour to Pandavas by vanquishing and capturing Duryodhana and his men. The Gandharvas had done what Pandavas were supposed to do. Yudhishthir, however, thought differently; he felt that there might be grave differences among the blood relations, but an insult and defeat from a stranger must not be tolerated. He commanded that Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahadev should take the chariots of Kurus and rescue Duryodhana and his accomplices from the captivity of Gandharvas. He also commanded that if Gandharvas do not peacefully agree to release Kauravas, then they should not hesitate from waging war against Gandharvas. Bhima and Arjun were reluctant, but they obeyed the command of their elder brother and emperor Yudhishthir.

Taking powerful but a vanquished army of Kurus along, Bhima and Arjun went and challenged the Gandharvas and asked them to release Duryodhana forthwith. Gandharvas, however, were in no mood to do that, and a terrible war ensued. As a result, there was bloodshed and many lives were lost. Chitrasena, a great friend of Arjun, was watching all this quite amazed as he had captured Duryodhana to please his Pandava friends. Arjun then enquired why Chitrasena was humiliating Duryodhana and his brothers when their wives were accompanying them. He replied that the Kuru princes had come to rejoice over the misfortune of Pandavas; therefore, the Gandharvas had shown them their place. After that, Arjun asked Chitrasena to come with him and meet Yudhishthir. Chitrasena met Yudhishthir and told him that he knew why Duryodhana and his accomplices, full of vanity and malice, had come to that forest as they wanted to celebrate the adversity of the noble-minded Pandava brothers and their wife, Draupadi. Yudhishthir at that time expressed gratefulness, also because Chitrasena had spared the lives of Duryodhana and other Kurus. He then requested Chitrasena to set Duryodhana free. After that, Yudhishthir spoke affectionately to Duryodhana telling him to go back to his kingdom without feeling dejected.

But Duryodhana did not feel grateful and was full of resentment. Bending his head with shame and sorrow, he slowly went back towards his own people. Late in the night, Karna met Duryodhana thinking that he had defeated the Gandharvas. Duryodhana then narrated the story of his escape with the intervention of the Pandavas. He lamented, "Alas, what greater sorrow could be mine that I, chained as a prisoner, should be offered as a tribute to Yudhishthir! Alas! Those Pandavas, who were always persecuted by me, got me released from the captivity of the Gandharvas and thereafter set me free." Duryodhana wished if he had met his death in that battle with the Gandharvas, that would have been much better than surviving in this manner, saved by Pandavas! Duryodhana then announced that he would fast unto death at that very place and they should all go back to Hastinapur and he said that Dushasana would become the Crown Prince. Dushasana, however, refused to accept the offer and insisted that only Duryodhana would be the king. Kuru princes tried to convince Duryodhana that, by saving his life, Pandavas had not done any favour but had only done their duty as they were living in his dominion. Karna thereafter said very emphatically that he need not feel grateful to the Pandavas, as they had done their duty while residing in his jurisdiction. However, Duryodhana was still determined to fast unto death.

Shakuni intervened to suggest that instead of dying shamefully, Duryodhana should act as a large-hearted and magnanimous monarch by giving back as reward their kingdom of Indraprastha to Pandavas and also establish brotherly relations with them. This suggestion was also not acceptable to Duryodhana as, even after

sending the Pandavas to the forest after the rigged game of dice, he was burning with jealousy. He nurtured a deep desire for killing all of them. Finally, persuaded by the citizens and the Brahmans, Duryodhana came back to Hastinapur with his entourage. Bhishma reminded him that in the time of adversity, Karna had run away, leaving him behind to die whereas Pandavas had saved him. Therefore, he should shed his enmity towards Pandavas. At that time, Karna took a significant decision of going to win many other kingdoms for Duryodhana, accompanied by his army, in order to prove his loyalty and prowess. Karna thereafter, left for his victory march to win kingdoms for Duryodhana. He defeated Drupada and made him pay tribute. He also defeated Vanga and Kalinga, Mithila and Magadh, Avanti and Yavana; he made all of them pay tribute. Karna then brought the entire wealth, collected in this manner, to Hastinapur and told Duryodhana to rule over the whole world fearlessly as an emperor. Kuru princes extended a very hearty welcome to Karna and said that with him as their protector, they did not need to be afraid of anyone in the whole world.

On account of victories and wealth brought by Karna, Duryodhana decided to conduct Rajasuya Sacrifice. Swift messengers were sent to invite kings and Sages from all over. A messenger was also sent to invite Yudhishthir in Dvaitavana, who responded that they could not attend any such programme before the end of 12 years of exile and one year of living incognito. The Yajna was very well organized and concluded without any hindrance. Karna thereafter said with pride that he would kill Arjun and all other Pandavas in battle and, at that time, Duryodhana would conduct another Rajasuya Yajna. The news of Karna's vow to kill Arjun was carried to Yudhishthir by the spies. He became extremely anxious, and he lost his peace of mind. He decided to change his abode, and all the Pandavas moved to the Kamyaka Forest for completing the 12^{th} year of miserable living in the forests.

Chapter 16

Jayadratha, king of Sindhu-Sauvira, tried to abduct Draupadi

Realizing that all this misery faced by Pandavas were due to that stupid game of dice, played by him most recklessly, Yudhishthir felt repentant and could not sleep in peace. Then one day, Sage Vyas came to meet them, and he told Yudhishthir that no man ever enjoys unmixed happiness and those men who neither practice asceticism nor give in charity never enjoy lasting happiness. After that, those mighty car-warriors, fond of hunting, lived in that forest happily for some days. One day jayadratha, king of Sindhu-Sauvira halted in Kamyaka forest and found gorgeous looking Draupadi standing alone, shedding her lustre all around. Jayadratha at that time developed evil intentions towards her. He sent Kotikasya to enquire about Draupadi's antecedents. Draupadi having moonlike face replied that she was the daughter of King Drupad and wife of five illustrious and effulgent Pandavas. After that, Drupada introduced himself as well as his associate kings and warriors. Draupadi served breakfast to all of them.

That vicious king Jayadratha, at that time, tried to entice Draupadi saying that a beautiful, accomplished female like her should not partake in the miseries of fallen heroes and that she should become his wife and rule over the kingdoms of Sindhu and Sauvira (3/267/17). Draupadi got extremely angry, and she told Jayadratha to feel ashamed of himself and be afraid of what those five great Pandava heroes of unparalleled strength were capable of doing with him. Then the king of Sindhu and Sauvira tried to abduct her using force, Draupadi shouted that when Arjun will shoot dreadful shafts from Gandiva and when Bhima would

advance towards him with a mace, Jayadratha would surely meet his end. Jayadratha, who was actually Draupadi's brother-in-law as he was the husband of Duryodhana's sister Subala, caught hold of her by upper garment but Draupadi managed to push him away with great force. After that, using great strength, that wily Jayadratha dragged Draupadi into his chariot. A little later Pandavas came back to their hermitage. Then Draupadi's maid told them the story of her abduction by Jayadratha.

Five Pandava brothers were furious, and they saw the dust raised by the hoofs of horses belonging to Jayadratha. They quickly sat in their chariots; holding their effulgent weapons, they followed the abductor of Draupadi. They first attacked Jayadratha's foot soldiers, who started begging for mercy. Then they attacked the chariot-riding warriors of Jayadratha. With their sharp weapons, the Pandavas destroyed many chariots and killed many horses and elephants of the warriors of Sindhu-Sauvira. Arjun alone killed 12 warriors of high strength with his arrows. Jayadratha got terrified, dropped Draupadi from his chariot, and ran away to save his own life. Draupadi walked with Dhaumya towards Yudhishthir, Bhima asked the king to take Draupadi to the hermitage and console her and he himself would follow that stupid king of Sindhu-Sauvira and put him to sleep forever. Yudhishthir at that time asked Bhima not to kill Jayadratha as he was the husband of Dushala, daughter of Gandhari and their own cousin sister. Draupadi felt sad and anguished at these words of Yudhishthir; she turned towards Arjun and Bhima saying that for the sake of her honour that wicked-minded Jayadratha must be killed. She reminded that even the scriptures have ordained that an enemy, who dared carry away one's wife, must be put to death.

Yudhishthir came back to the hermitage with Draupadi and Dhaumya, whereas Arjun and Bhima went after Jayadratha. Arjun managed to kill the two horses of Jayadratha; terrified Saindhava king ran for his life on foot. Bhima pursued him, seized him by the hair, kicked him on the head; and he fell unconscious. Arjun reminded Bhima about what the king Yudhishthir had said and prevented him from killing that wicked king of Sindhu-Sauvira. Then furious Bhima shaved Jayadratha's head and asked him to tell everyone in his kingdom that Pandavas had enslaved him. Carrying him along, Bhima produced the slave king before Yudhishthir, who got him released. This misplaced mercy of Yudhishthir created one more ferocious enemy; Jayadratha went, prayed to Shiva, and observed austerities so that he could take revenge from Pandavas.

Here a question again needs to be asked why Yudhishthir is described as Dharmaraj again and again in Mahabharat. He is supposed to be wise and truthful, just and kind. The meaning of Dharmaraj is a king, who rules righteously,

dispensing justice. However, Yudhishthir failed to strike a balance between mercy and justice, and he also was unable to practice wisdom. Where was any moral or ethical need for him to save Duryodhana from the clutches of Gandharvas when he was fully aware that he had been wicked and deceitful and had also piled boundless humiliation on Draupadi? Yudhishthir was also aware that the war was inevitable. Was he waiting for a much greater disaster and death of millions of warriors later-on by getting Duryodhana saved at that time from Gandharvas? After that Yudhishthir saved the life of Jayadratha, the abductor of his wife, giving the reason that the life of Jayadratha must be spared because he was the husband of Duryodhana's sister named Dushala. When Jayadratha was abducting Draupadi using force, was he not aware that he was abducting the spouse of his wife's brothers? Did not justice demand that he should have been killed at that time? This unethical mercy, not recommended in any of the scriptures, shown by Yudhishthir at that time, later on, cost them the life of their young son of great prowess, named Abhimanyu.

Feeling very upset and anguished at Draupadi's abduction, Yudhishthir went to the ascetic Markandeya. He enquired from the Sage how could chaste, pious, virtuous and noble Draupadi be subjected to such cruel treatment and had the Sage heard of anyone more unfortunate than Yudhishthir. Sage Markandeya then responded saying that even greater calamity had overtaken noble prince Shri Ram when he had to live in the forests for 14 years and the Demon King Ravana had abducted his wife. Yudhishthir at that time wanted to know in detail the story of Shri Ram and his wife, Sita. After that in 728 verses, included in chapters 274 to 292 of Mahabharat, Markandeya narrated the story of Lord Ram, telling that he being the eldest son, was declared as the crown prince, but instead he left for 14 years of exile to honour the innocent promise made by his father to his stepmother. His brother Lakshman and his wife Sita accompanied him to the forest just as Yudhishthir's brothers and wife had come with him to the forest. During the 13th year, Ravana had abducted Shri Ram's wife Sita, using force and deceit, and then carried her away across the sea to Lanka.

प्राप्तमप्रतिमं दुःखं रामेण भरतर्षभ ।
रक्षसाजानकी तस्य हृता भार्या बलीयसा ।। वन पर्व, 3/274/01
प्रपतेद् द्यौः सनक्षत्रा पृथिवी शकलीभवेत् ।
शैत्यमग्निरियान्नाहं त्यजेयं रघुनन्दनम् ।। वन पर्व,3/278/38 ।।

Meaning, 3/274/01: *In answer to his question, Sage Markandeya consoled Yudhishthir narrating the story of the abduction of Sita by Ravana when Shri Ram was living in the forest with his brother Lakshman.* The Sage added that even greater misfortune had

overtaken Shri Ram when the Demon Ravana had abducted his wife Sita, using force and deception, and after that carried her to Lanka.

Meaning, 3/278/38: When Ravana was trying to intimidate Sita into marrying him, Sita had replied that even if the firmament with all its stars fell down, even if the earth was reduced to atoms and even if the fire be deprived of heat and turn cold, I (Sita) will not forsake the descendant of Raghu, Shri Ram.

Sage Markandeya after that narrated the story further to Yudhishthir saying it took almost 10 months for Shri Ram and Lakshman to trace the whereabouts of that princess with the help of Sugriva and Hanuman. Shri Ram then got a bridge constructed across the sea, killed Ravana along with his ministers and family members. Only then, he could bring Sita back to Ayodhya; only after that, he was coronated as the king at Ayodhya. Sage Markandeya at that time added that Shri Ram was actively assisted by his brother Lakshman in rescuing Sita from the captivity of cruel demon king Ravana.

Thus historically, Mahabharat is much later than the Ramayan era. In a very similar manner, Yudhishthir's brothers had saved Draupadi from the clutches of the evil-minded Saindhava king. These details provided much solace to the anguished king Yudhishthir. For many days Markandeya narrated several stories of remote past to provide comfort and relief to Yudhishthir. Consequently, the grief of Pandavas got diminished, and they continued to live in the Kamyaka forest.

After the departure of Arjun from heaven to join his brothers back in the forest, Sage Lomasha had assured Yudhishthir that he would also remove that greatest fear he had from Karna, which had been kept as a closely guarded secret by him.

Karna was known as *Daan-vir* (king of charity). He would never disappoint anyone, who came to ask for something, particularly after his morning bath. One night, the Sun god appeared in his dream and advised him never to part with his armour and earrings. Then one day, Indra in the garb of a Brahman appeared before Karna just after his bath and begged for his earrings and armour in charity. Karna agreed to accept the request provided Indra gave him a perfect dart, which would never fail. Indra gave him the dart prescribing the condition that it should be used against a mighty enemy when his own life was in danger. Karna after that removed the armour and the earrings and gave these to the Brahman. On hearing about this deception with Karna, Kuru princes felt anguished. Yudhishthir, however, felt very much relieved.

CHAPTER 17

Yudhishthir gave perfect answers to questions asked by the Yaksha

After the abduction of Draupadi by Jayadratha, Yudhishthir decided to change his abode; leaving Kamyaka Forest, they all returned to Dvaitavana. Many Brahmans also moved with them. One day when a Brahman was making fire by rubbing two sticks together, a churning rod got stuck in the horns of a deer. Frightened deer ran away very fast; Brahman desirous of preserving his Agnihotra approached Ajatashatru Yudhishthir. Taking their bows and arrows, Pandavas followed the deer, but after some time it went out of their sight. Fatigued and afflicted with hunger and thirst, all five brothers sat under a banyan tree. Anguished Nakul then asked Yudhishthir why they were made to suffer so many misfortunes, even though they had always been treading the path of virtue. Yudhishthir replied that there was no limit to troubles nor could their causes be ascertained. Bhima replied that calamity had overtaken them because he did not kill then and there the rogue Dushasana, who pulled Draupadi by the hair to the Assembly Hall. Arjun replied that their misfortune was attributable to the fact that he did not kill Duryodhana with his sharp arrow when he uttered such dishonourable words for Draupadi. Sahadev added that their misfortune was because he did not kill Shakuni when he defeated Yudhishthir deceitfully in the game of dice.

Thirsty and fatigued Yudhishthir asked Nakul to climb the tree and look for some drinking water. Nakul spotted the water pond at some distance; on receiving directions from Yudhishthir, he went to collect some water for his brothers. Reaching the spot and looking at the clean and clear water, Nakul became desirous of drinking it. At that time, one Yaksha said in a loud voice that before trying to drink water, Nakul must answer his questions. Disregarding these words, Nakul drank water and immediately fell down, as if dead. Seeing delay in the return of Nakul, Yudhishthir sent Sahadev, but he also met the same fate. Getting extremely worried, Yudhishthir sent Arjun to look for Nakul and Sahadev who had gone to fetch water. After arriving at the banks of that lake, Arjun was shocked to see his brothers lying dead. Holding his bow and arrow, he looked around but could not see anyone in the forest; then he started proceeding towards the water. Again the invisible voice thundered that only after answering his questions Arjun should proceed to drink any water. Arjun was furious, and he shot some *Shabdabhedi* (sound-piercing) arrows in the direction from where the sound was coming. The loud voice of invisible Yaksha again repeated that he should not venture to drink water without answering his questions. Arjun attempted to drink water and fell down dead.

Yudhishthir sent Bhima to look for his three brothers. He was shocked to see them lying dead by the lakeside, and he thought that a Yaksha or a Rakshasa must have killed them. Therefore before preparing to fight with them, he decided first to drink water. However, he also met the same fate. When none of his four brothers returned, Yudhishthir went himself. Looking at his brothers lying dead, Yudhishthir got drowned in a sea of sorrow; with an anguished and grief-stricken heart, he started searching for the cause of his brothers' death. He was wondering that there were no signs of any fight, nor were there any footprints, then how could all his four brothers die while they still maintained lively looks on their faces. Thinking so, he started entering the water when the invisible voice shouted again that if he attempted to take water from the pond which belonged to him without answering his questions, he would meet the fate his brothers had met. Yudhishthir at that time offered to answer the questions of that mighty Yaksha. Some of the questions and answers went like this –

Q. What makes the Sun shine every day, and who remain near the Sun?

A. The power of Brahma makes the Sun shine, and planets remain near the Sun.

Q. What is weightier than the earth, and what is higher than the sky?

A. Mother is weightier than the earth, and the father is higher than the sky.

Q. What is the crowning refuge of religion, and what of the celebrity?

A. Liberality is the crowning refuge of religion, and charity is the shelter of the renowned.

Q. What is the best kind of wealth and which is the best of gains?

A. Knowledge is the best kind of wealth, and health is the most significant gain.

Q. What is the highest virtue, and by subduing what the men do not experience misery?

A. Absence of cruelty is the highest virtue, and a subdued mind does not lead to misery.

Q. What is the invincible enemy of men, and what is ignorance?

A. Anger is the most invincible enemy, and the absence of knowledge of ethics is ignorance.

Q. Whether by birth or by good character or by learning Vedas, one becomes a Brahman?

A. Neither birth nor study of Vedas, but only good character makes a person a real Brahman.

In this manner, Yaksha put several questions, and Yudhishthir answered them all. Then Yaksha offered to revive one of his brothers as per his choice. Yudhishthir answered that Nakul should be brought back to life. Yaksha enquired why he preferred Nakul over Bhima of great prowess and Arjun, a great bowman. Yudhishthir replied that dharma is the only shield of man. His father had two wives; Kunti has one son alive in Yudhishthir, and Madri would have the other one alive in Nakul. Pleased with this answer and repeating that, since the absence of cruelty was the highest virtue as per Yudhishthir, Yaksha restored all his four brothers to life. They woke up as if they had awakened from a sound slumber. The Yaksha told Yudhishthir that he was actually Dharma, the god of justice, and had come to test him. He was pleased that he came out victorious from the test and was also happy to look at his-self-control, mercifulness, and equanimity of mind. After that, the Yaksha offered that he could ask for boons.

The first boon that Yudhishthir asked for was that the sacred fire of that Brahman, whose fire sticks were carried away by the deer, may not be destroyed. The Yaksha granted that boon and offered another one. Yudhishthir said that the 13th year of their exile was about to begin and no-one might be able to recognize them during the course of that year of incognito living. Yaksha said that they

should live in disguise during the 13th year in the kingdom of King Virat and that no one would be able to recognize them. Yaksha offered one more boon. Yudhishthir replied that he was satisfied and that he may always live a virtuous life. Yaksha after that disappeared, and Pandavas started consulting each other about their staying incognito during the 13th year after their exile. Yudhishthir at the time was 68 years' old, Arjun and Shri Krishna were around 64 years old, whereas twins had entered their 62nd year. From this stage, the story proceeds from Vana Parva to Virat Parva.

CHAPTER 18

Pandavas lived incognito in Viratanagar for one year by hiding their identities

Pandavas had completed 12 years of living in exile when Yudhishthir told them that the 13th year had just begun and they needed to live facing all difficulties so that no-one could recognize them. (Virataparva:4/1/8). He added that wily Duryodhana would have already sent his spies all around so that the Pandavas are identified and then forced to live in exile for another 12 years. Yudhishthir thereafter enquired from Arjun to make an informed choice of a place where they could live incognito for one full year. Arjun in response replied –

सन्ति रम्या जनपदा बह्व अन्नाः परितः कुरून ।
पाञ्चालाश चेदिमत्स्याश च शूरसेनाः पटच्चराः ।
दशार्णा नव राष्ट्रं च मल्लाः शाल्व युगंधराः ॥ विराट पर्व, 4/1/12 ॥
एतेषां कतमो राजन निवासस तव रोचते ।
वत्स्यामो यत्र राजेन्द्र संवत्सरम इमं वयम ॥ विराट पर्व, 4/1/13 ॥

Meaning: Arjun said that around the kingdom of Kurus, there were many beautiful countries with plenty of grains. These include Panchala, Chedi, Matsya, Shurasena, Patachchara, Dasharanas, Navarashtra, Malla, Shalva, Yugandhara. Arjun then requested Yudhishthir to chose any of these for the living of all the Pandavas throughout one year for incognito living.

Yudhishthir decided to live incognito in Viratanagar as the king of Matsya Pradesh named Virat was a noble as well as brave king, and he was also very fond of Pandavas. Then they had consultations about concealing their real identities. Yudhishthir said that he would seek employment under king Virat as a Brahman named Kanka, and he would entertain the king, his relatives, and courtiers with the game of dice and some astrology. In answer to any questions from King Virat, he would say that he learnt all these things while working with Pandava king Yudhishthir.

After that, Yudhishthir enquired from Bhima that he was so full of strength and prowess, how would he work under Virat concealing his identity. Bhima replied that he would seek employment as the chief cook under the name Ballava, prepare delicious food items, and would also enjoy eating himself as he had a big appetite. To please the king, he would also tame mighty elephants and powerful bulls. Whenever the king would so desire, he would also act as a wrestler and defeat his adversaries without killing anyone. After that, Yudhishthir was worried how would Arjun, the best bowman of the world, would be able to conceal his identity. Arjun responded addressing Yudhishthir as emperor and said that he would declare himself of neuter sex and assume the name Brihannala. To hide the bow-string marks on his arms, he would wear jackets, conch shell bangles; he would seek a job for teaching music and dance to the ladies of Virat household. He would explain to the king Virat that he learnt all these things while living as a waiting-maid of Draupadi in the household of king Yudhishthir.

Then with tears in his eyes, Yudhishthir turned to the most handsome and heroic prince Nakul and enquired from him what was he proposing to do. Nakul replied that he would seek the job of the keeper of horses as Granthik, saying that in good old days he was in-charge of horses of emperor Yudhishthir. After that wise and learned, Sahadev proposed that he would assume the name of Tantipal and seek the job of looking after the cows of king Virat; he would say that he had gained the experience looking after the cows of emperor Yudhishthir in good old days.

Finally, Yudhishthir turned towards Draupadi saying she was dearer than life, had to be cherished like a mother and respected like an elder sister; a princess herself how would she work in the household of a king. The wise and courageous Draupadi replied that she would seek a job as Sairandhari in the service of queen Sudeshna, skilled in dressing hair and looking after the palace ladies. She would thus have the right to protect her honour from any wicked men. She then added that she would also say that she had earlier worked as a waiting-maid to Draupadi in the palace of Yudhishthir.

After having decided about living incognito in Matsya kingdom of king Virat, Yudhishthir sent his priest, Dhaumya to king Drupada of Panchal. He also sent cooks and maids of Draupadi with the chariots and charioteers to king Drupada and asked them to tell the king that Pandavas had left for some unknown place leaving them behind. Brahmans were asked to go back to their places of choice. Dhaumya then said some words of advice to Pandavas about how they should live as employees of a king; they should never take any liberties with the king or other members of the royal household, neither talk too much nor remain too silent. Dhaumya then added that they should never render any unsolicited advice to the king. After short intervals, they should utter words of reverence to the king; they should never reveal any secrets of the king and never try to befriend the ladies of the king's household. In the presence of a king, one should never laugh very loudly but should smile with modesty; a person should never talk ill about the king but should eulogize him even in his absence. After that, Dhaumya lighted up the fire, offered oblations with Mantras wishing success and prosperity for the Pandavas. Those heroes then left for Viratnagar and Dhaumya left for Panchal Pradesh.

Led by Yudhishthir, Pandavas started moving towards Matsya Desh; carrying their weapons and quivers along; they proceeded in the direction of river Kalindi. After crossing kingdoms of Shurasena, leaving the kingdom of Panchals to their South, they entered Matsya's territories. Then they saw that adjacent to the cremation grounds, there was a gigantic Shami tree. On that tree, the Pandavas hid their weapons, including bows, arrows, swords and maces. They also fastened a corpse on that tree so that people would shun the tree due to bad smell. After that, they proceeded towards the capital city. On the way, they offered prayers to Goddess Durga, who is the giver of prosperity and fame, success and fortitude, intellect and knowledge, forgiveness and mercy. The mother Goddess blessed them with success and gave the blessing to Yudhishthir would again be the emperor after destroying his enemies. After that, the Pandavas reached outside the court of King Virat.

First of all, Yudhishthir presented himself as a Brahman named Kanka, who had earlier been a friend of Emperor Yudhishthir and had learnt from him the game of dice. He sought employment under king Virata. Impressed with his personality and humility, King Virat offered that he should stay as his friend and assist him in giving employment to suitable people. After sometime Bhima, a man of dreadful strength, entered in the guise of a cook and introduced himself as Ballava, a great cook and sought employment as an expert in culinary arts. He further added that in the days gone by, his curries had been tasted and appreciated by King Yudhishthir. He also introduced himself as a skilled wrestler. King Virat appointed him as the in-charge of his kitchen.

After that, Draupadi dressed as Sairandhari started roaming around, looking miserable and pleading that she had come there seeking employment as a maid. Virat's beloved wife Sudeshna happened to see her and said that she looked very charming, royal, accomplished and attractive and wanted to know who she actually was. Draupadi then replied that she had formerly served Satyabhama wife of Lord Krishna and she knew how to make hair and different kinds of garlands. Draupadi, wife of Yudhishthir, used to address her as Malini fondly. Draupadi, in the guise of Sairandhari, further said that she was willing to serve as long as she was provided with good food and living. Queen Sudeshna responded by saying that she would like to employ her but was afraid that her husband might get captivated with her beauty. Sairandhari at that time explained that neither king Virata nor any other man could win her because her five brave Gandharva husbands always protected her. They want her to serve only at a place where she is not asked to take food partaken by someone else and is not asked to wash anybody's feet. Queen Sudeshna offered her the job as per her desire and a room inside the palace.

Sometime later Sahadev, wearing the dress of a cowherd and speaking his dialect, also entered the city and stood in the vicinity of cow pasture of the royal palace. The king got him called and enquired as to who he was and why he had come there. Sahadev replied that he was a vaishya known by the name Arishtanemi and he used to look after thousands of cows owned by emperor Yudhishthir and he was recognised by the name Tantipal. Sahadev added that now he was unaware where all the five Pandava brothers had gone, and therefore he was looking for a job. Sahadev added that he knew everything about the nurturing of cows. King Virat replied that he had about one lakh kine and that he would put all of these under his care.

After a few days, another handsome person was seen at the palace gate, dressed like a woman putting on large earrings and elegant conch bracelets set in gold. Arjun introduced himself as of neuter sex, knowing nothing about his parents. He submitted before the king that he was an expert in singing, dancing and playing on musical instruments. His name was Brihannala, and he had come looking for a job. King tested him in his skills, got confirmed that he was of neuter gender and then employed him to teach dance and music to his daughter, Uttara, and her friends and maids. Arjun began to live like one of neuter gender and behaved amiably with the palace inmates.

Then after a few days, Nakul entered the palace gates and started looking closely at the king's horses and requested him to employ him as a horse-keeper. The king was impressed with the handsome man looking like a celestial and enquired from him about his antecedents. Nakul replied that he was earlier employed as keeper of horses by King Yudhishthir and he was known by the name Granthik, but now he did not know where all the five Pandava brothers had gone. Nakul replied that he knew everything about the temper of horses and knew how

to keep them fit and under control. The king agreed to entrust all his horses to the care of Nakul *alias* Granthik.

Employed by the Matsya king in this manner, all the five Pandava brothers started living in the kingdom of King Virat in conformity with their respective vocations. Kanka (Yudhishthir) won the hearts of the king and his son Uttar; Ballava (Bhim) took great care of their palates by preparing delicious meals. Eunuch Brihannala (Arjun) won the faith and admiration of Princess Uttara while teaching her singing and dancing. Tantipal (Sahadev) looked after the cows to the satisfaction of the king; whereas Granthik (Nakul) became accomplished in-charge of the king's horses. Sairandhari (Draupadi) pleased the queen and the princess with her caring services. Thus discharging their respective duties with elegance and efficiency and to the satisfaction of King Virat, all the six Pandavas used to take care of each other silently and secretly.

Then in the fourth month, a great festival was organized in Viratanager in honour of divine Brahma, when wrestlers had come from all over Bharatvarsh. There were colossal wrestling bouts, but one wrestler of great prowess named Jimuta was unwinnable and defeated all other wrestlers of Matsya kingdom. Then king Virat asked his cook Ballava to fight against Jimuta. Both of them fought like infuriated elephants, striking each other like thunderbolts, and all the spectators felt delighted. Finally, Ballava lifted Jimuta, whirled him around a hundred times and thereafter threw him to the ground; he fell down dead. Pleased with his strength and wrestling skills, the king gave away plenty of riches to Ballava.

Thus, 11 months had gone by with Sairandhari (Draupadi) serving the queen and the princess with great care. The brother of queen Sudeshna named Kichak was the Commander-in-chief of king Virat's army, and the king owed much of his power and prestige to him. Kichak was inordinately vain about his strength and about the influence he wielded over the king. He was smitten with Draupadi's exceptional beauty and elegance and developed an uncontrollable passion for her. It never occurred to him that a mere maid working as Sairandhari would resist his amorous advances. Her ethical conduct made everyone believe that her five Gandharva husbands were continually protecting her. However, Kichak could neither be repelled nor frightened. When persecution by Kichak became intolerable, Sairandhari complained to queen Sudeshna and sought her protection.

Kichak had greater influence over his sister, and he sought her help in satisfying his passion for her maid. Both of them hatched a conspiracy to entrap Draupadi. One night many delicious eatables and drinks were prepared in the house of Kichak as a great feast was organized. Sudeshna called Sairandhari aside and handed over to her a golden jug containing wine and asked her to hand it over to

Kichak in his house. Sairandhari begged with the queen that some other maid be sent in her place, but the queen would not listen. Quite hesitatingly Draupadi went to the house of Kichak, who was inebriated and maddened with lust. He began to pester Sairandhari with urgent entreaties, but she did not yield and tried to frighten him, saying that his Gandharva husbands might kill him. Kichak, however, held her forcibly, but Sairandhari wrenched herself free and fled to the court, wailing loudly and seeking protection. Kichak followed her and kicked her hard in the presence of everyone and kept showering abuses, but mortally afraid of Kichak's anger; nobody came to Draupadi's rescue.

Draupadi could not tolerate this humiliation, and in the middle of the night, she went to Ballava (Bhima); she expressed her agony and grief on such treatment meted out to her. Bhima tried to console her affectionately and then promised that he would surely and certainly kill Kichak. They discussed and decided that Draupadi would beguile Kichak to come to a lonely spot in the dancing hall, where Bhima would be waiting to pounce upon him. Next morning Kichak again tried to seduce Sairandhari saying that nobody in Matsya country would try to protect her from him and that she should happily accept her romantic advances. Draupadi pretended to yield and asked Kichak to come to the dancing hall where she would be waiting for him. Kichak felt extremely happy. He bathed and perfumed himself before going to the dancing hall at night. In the very dim light, he saw someone lying on a couch. Believing that she was Sairandhari, he gently went in the dark towards her. Alas, this was not Sairandhari but the iron frame of Ballava (Bhima), who leapt forth on him like a lion. Kichaka was no coward; as a result, a grim battle followed. Finally, Bhima succeeded in killing Kichak, hammering and kneading his body into a lump of flesh. After conveying the happy news to Sairandhari, Ballava went back to his kitchen in haste, bathed and rubbed sandal paste all over his body.

Draupadi woke up the guards and sobbing she told them that Kichaka had come to molest her at night. Despite repeated requests and warnings about her Gandharva husbands, Kichak did not stop molesting her, and finally, her Gandharva husbands killed him. She showed his dead body to the guards, which was reduced to a shapeless mass of flesh. The people of Viratanagar as well as of royal household got frightened of Sairandhari and her Gandharva husbands. Queen Sudeshna asked her to leave the city immediately as her Gandharva husbands may not stop at anything due to jealousy. Sairandhari pleaded that she should be allowed to work for one more month, after that her Gandharva husbands would come and take her away. Sudeshna reluctantly accepted her request.

CHAPTER 19

Duryodhana, supported by colossal army and Trigartas, attacked Matsya kingdom

It is rightly said that the wicked never change their ways. Duryodhana was not satisfied with the humiliation and torture piled upon noble Pandavas by defeating them in the game of dice through deceit. In the 13th year after Pandava's exile, he had sent his spies all over so that Pandavas could be traced and they could be sent for another twelve years of exile. Towards the end of the 12th month of 13th year, the spies brought the news that in order to protect the honour of a woman, a Gandharva had killed in a single combat powerful army chief, Kichak of Viratanagar. At once Duryodhana presumed that the Gandharva might be Bhima and the female must have been Draupadi. In open Assembly Duryodhana opined that Pandavas might be living in Viratanagar; therefore, Kuru forces should invade Matsya country and carry away their cows. If Pandavas were hiding there, they would surely come to defend King Virat, and after thus getting recognized, they would have to live in the forest again for 12 more years. If they were not there, nothing would be lost. The shameful thing is that Great Drona and grandsire Bhishma not only gave their implied consent to this indecent proposal but also accompanied Duryodhana to execute such an unethical project.

King Susharma, the ruler of Trigarta, supported the proposal due to his earlier enmity with King Virat and offered to attack Matsya country. Strongly supported by Karna, Duryodhana announced that Susharma with his forces should attack Matsya from the south-east. When Virat's army would be busy fighting Susharma, Duryodhana with mighty Kuru army would attack Matsya from the north.

Susharma, accompanied by powerful *chaturangini sena*, invaded Matsya from the south, seized the cattle and laid waste the gardens. King Virat at that time missed Kichak who would have made short work of enemy forces in no time. Kanka, however, assured the king that while working with emperor Yudhishthir, he had got some training in weaponry. Similarly, cook Ballava, Tantipal and Granthik had also learnt some tricks of warfare. If provided with weapons and chariots, they would also go to the battlefield to vanquish the enemy.

A fierce battle followed between the armies of Trigarta king Susharma and Matsya king Virat. Susharma attacked Virat, broke his chariot, and forced him to get down and fight on foot. Thereafter, Susharma captured King Virat and held him captive in his chariot. As a result, the soldiers of Virat got demoralized and started running away from the battlefield. At that time Kanka commanded Ballava to attack Susharma, get King Virat released and he himself rallied the forces of Matsya country. Bhima had got an opportunity to display his prowess after many months. He attacked Susharma; got King Virat released from his captivity and in a split second he changed the course of the battle by capturing the Trigarta king Susharma. Gaining confidence, the dispersed forces of Viratanagar rallied into new formations. They attacked the demoralized forces of Trigartas and vanquished them completely. Susharma was released by Bhima only after he bowed before king Virat and accepted his defeat.

The news of Susharma's defeat at the hands of king Virat soon reached the city. The people were preparing to extend a warm welcome to king Virata, who was on his way towards the capital city after vanquishing the enemy. Just at that time, a big army led by Duryodhana attacked the Matsya kingdom from the north. The Kuru army rounded up countless cows and killed many shepherds. The leaders of herdsmen ran to prince Uttar, pleading for ensuring the safety of their kine and protection to their men and women. When this protection was being sought, Prince Uttar was surrounded by many people, especially the women of the palace. The prince felt like displaying his valour and said that the entire force had gone with the King Virat to fight Susharma and his Trigarta armies in the south of the city. If only he could get a charioteer, he would have gone and defeated the Kuru forces in the north. Draupadi heard these words of the prince Uttar and ran to princess Uttara. She informed the Princess that Brihannala had been Arjun's charioteer and had also learnt some archery from him. Therefore the princess should immediately order Brihannala to go and drive the prince's chariot so that the security of Matsya and its cows could be assured. The princess Uttara immediately requested the prince Uttar to take Brihannala as a charioteer and cover himself with glory by defeating the Kuru invaders.

After that, the princess ran to the dancing hall and told Brihannala to go as a charioteer with the Prince so that Kauravas could be prevented from taking away the wealth and kine of Matsya country. In her innocence, she assured Brihannala that she need not be afraid as the Prince would protect her. Hiding a smile and after displaying some hesitation, Brihannala agreed. Brihannala at that time pretended to be unfamiliar with the armour and wore it looking quite awkward. Finally, Brihannala harnessed the horses and drove the chariot like an expert, announcing that the Prince would definitely be victorious. Prince Uttar set off with enthusiasm, and Arjun drove the chariot with dexterity. Suddenly Uttar saw entire Kuru army drawn in battle formation, led by Bhishma, Drona, Duryodhana, Karna, Kripa and Ashwatthama. Beholding such mighty heroes lined up against him in the battlefield, Uttar's courage vanished, mouth went dry, and he told Brihannala to turn back the chariot as he was incapable of fighting single-handed against such mighty warriors and their forces.

Brihannala, nay Arjun, tried to reassure the Prince and nudged him to prepare for the fight. He said that the citizens and the ladies of the palace had high expectations from the brave prince, and he should not betray their faith. The Prince, however, was so frightened that he announced that let the Kuru forces carry away all the wealth and all the cows of Matsya kingdom, let the ladies and the citizens of Viratanagar think that the prince Uttar was a coward, but he was not willing to lay down his life in that unwinnable battle. The prince asked Brihannala to turn back the chariot. Seeing him reluctant to do so, prince Uttar threw down his bow and arrows, jumped out of the chariot and started running towards the city. Brihannala was pursuing the running prince asking him to come back and behave like true Kshatriya. Poor prince was frightened out of all proportions but Brihannala, nay Arjun, wanted to save the prince from himself. Arjun then reassured the prince that he should only drive the chariot and he would single-handedly defeat the Kuru forces, whereas the prince would bathe in glory. With these words, Arjun lifted the prince on to the chariot and handed over the reins of the horses to him, and asked him to drive the chariot towards the Shami tree near the burial ground.

The Kaurava army found the spectacle very amusing whereas Drona, who was watching intently, concluded that the strangely dressed charioteer was Arjun and he shared his judgment with Bhishma. Reaching near the Shami tree, Arjun asked the prince to climb the tree and bring down the hidden arms and weapons. The Prince was alarmed and anguished as he thought that there was a corpse hanging on the tree. Brihannala, however, assured the prince that actually the weapons belonging to the Pandavas were hidden on the big old Shami tree. The reluctant prince climbed the tree and brought down the leather bag. When the bag was opened, the prince was surprised to see the effulgent and gleaming weapons. He

mustered some courage and touched the weapons; the very touch seemed to instil some courage in the prince.

Arjun at that time revealed his true identity, saying that the bow named Gandiva was incapable of being vanquished. Prince Uttar enquired what adverse circumstances could make the hero as powerful as Indra himself live in the guise of a eunuch. Arjun replied that he was doing so for one year to honour the command of his elder brother and that vow for one year has since been accomplished. This revelation instilled a lot of self-confidence and courage in prince Uttar. He then declared that he was the best charioteer in the world and that the best of horses in the world were yoked to his chariot, which was capable of carrying the best bowman in the world named Arjun. Then Arjun took off bracelets from his arms and put on a pair of beautiful gloves and tied his black curly hair with a piece of cloth. Arjun then stringed Gandiva and twanged it thrice. The hearts of the Kauravas quaked when they heard the twang of Gandiva. Then Arjun blew his conch Devadutta; Kuru army was alarmed thinking that Pandavas had come to fight against them.

Drona warned that their armies should be reorganized as Arjun had come to fight against them. Duryodhana did not like these words of honour uttered about Arjun. He said that there was nothing to be afraid as the period of 13 years had not yet ended, and, for revealing himself, Arjun, and all his Pandava brothers would have to go back to the forest for another 12 years. Duryodhana wondered aloud why Drona was so obsessed with the prowess of Arjun and why should they be afraid of fighting against him. Ridiculing the preceptors, Karna then said that let them all stay back; he alone would vanquish Arjun in the battle. Preceptor Kripa then intervened to say that Karna was saying foolish words; for fighting against Arjun, they all needed to launch a combined attack. Therefore, bragging about fighting alone must be shunned. Karna grew angry and said that the preceptors always enjoyed singing Arjun's praises, whether they do so out of fear or from excessive fondness. Then quite rudely he added that those preceptors might not fight, but he would stand alone there for the sake of Duryodhana and fight against Arjun single-handed. Finally, Karna said scornfully that the men learned in Vedas, who love and praise their enemies, had no business to be there.

Ashwatthama, who was Drona's son and Kripa's nephew, could not tolerate this scorn at his revered elders. He admonished Karna and Duryodhana in a very stern language saying that it was true that Brahmanas, as a class, normally recite Vedas and very rarely fight battles against Kshatriya, but he had also not been able to find in any Shastra that it is honourable for a king to seize kingdom through cheating in the game of dice. Even those true heroes who win wars do not crow

about their prowess. Mother earth sustains all creatures without a whisper. Karna and Duryodhana should be ashamed of cheating the Pandavas of their kingdom through the game of dice. In which battle did they defeat Pandavas? Did not they perform the most abominable act of dragging Draupadi to the Assembly Hall trying to disrobe her? The Pandavas can never forgive them for humiliating Draupadi in this manner, said Ashwatthama.

Ashwatthama further added that Dhananjay was born to destroy the sinful sons of Dhritarashtra. The Kuru warriors were unable to tolerate any praise of Arjun, who is superior to them in strength and wisdom. Did not he defeat them after Draupadi's *swayamvar*? Did not he single-handedly save Duryodhana from Gandharva King Chitrasena when Karna had run away from the battlefield? Without considering the reasons and without weighing the consequences, Karna and Duryodhana were ever ready to wage war against noble and brave Arjun. Persons conversant with virtue say that a good disciple is like a son; for this reason, Arjun is dear to Ashwatthama's father, Drona. Ashwatthama at that time challenged them to call their wily uncle, Shakuni, to fight against Arjun and then win the war as he himself did not propose to fight against Dhananjay.

Finding the situation going out of control, Grandsire Bhishma intervened to say that no wise man would ever say disrespecting words to his Gurus. He requested Ashwatthama to excuse Duryodhana and Karna who were uttering some words only to nudge them into fighting the war. He requested Drona, Kripa and Ashwatthama to forget and forgive. They must realize that they were going to fight against Arjun; they could nurture any hopes of winning only if they were all united, added Bhishma. Then Bhishma turned towards Duryodhana and told him that stipulated period of 13 years had terminated a day before, and this was obvious when Arjun blew his conch. Bhishma after that explained (Virata Parva/52/2-4) that the wheel of time keeps revolving with Kashthas, Mahurtas, Days, Fortnights, and Months & with the constellations, stars and planets going along their courses. There is an increase of about two months every five years. On calculating in this way, there will be an addition of 5 months and 12 nights within 13 years and only after having completed this period, Arjun had revealed his identity.

Through these words, Bhishma had explained the Luni-solar calendar followed by the ancient Indian astronomers. A lunar year consists of 354 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3 seconds, whereas a solar year is of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. Thus, after about 32.5 months, a lunar year falls behind a solar year by about one month. To facilitate reconciliation, the practice of intercalary month (*adhik maas*) after about 32.5 months, was being followed by the ancients. This

practice is continuing till date. As per Bhishma, Pandavas had lived in exile for 13 lunar years, five months, and twelve nights. With precise modern astronomical calculations, they had completed their living in exile as well as living incognito for 24 days over and above 13 luni-solar years. Therefore Duryodhana's claim that Pandavas had not completed 13 years of exile was false and vicious.

CHAPTER 20

Making prince Uttar as his charioteer, Arjun vanquished all Kuru heroes

Bhishma turned towards Duryodhana and said that he needed to reflect a little before deciding on war. Since a period of 13 years of exile had just ended, it would probably be the right time to make peace with the Pandavas. The choice had to be made between a mutually destructive war or an honourable peace. Wily Duryodhana quickly replied that he had no desire to make peace with Pandavas and that he would not give them even one village. Drona at that time suggested that prince Duryodhana should be escorted back to Hastinapur by one-fourth of the army. Another hero, duly supported by forces, could take away the cows of Matsya kingdom. After that, the remaining five heroes, supported by the armies, would fight against Arjun. The Kaurava forces were then ranged accordingly.

Arjun had an intense look at Kaurava army and then said to Prince Uttar that he could not see Duryodhana's chariot and apparently he was driving away the cows of Matsya Desh towards Hastinapur. Therefore Arjun moved away from the Kaurava army and went after Duryodhana. When Arjun was thus chasing Duryodhana, he conveyed his respectful greetings to Bhishma, Drona, and Kripa by shooting arrows which fell at their feet. Very soon Arjun reached the spot where Kuru Forces had gathered the cows of Matsya Pradesh. He defeated the Kuru forces and recovered the cows back. Arjun then asked the cowherds of Matsya to take back their cows. After that, Arjun went after Duryodhana. Observing this, Bhishma, Drona and other Kuru warriors rushed to rescue Duryodhana, and they

started shooting arrows at Arjun. Arjun first destroyed the chariot and the charioteer of Karna; defeated in this manner, Karna had to withdraw from the battlefield. After that, Arjun fought against Drona, not intending to kill him but to force him to withdraw from the battlefield. Arjun cleverly handled the celestial weapons and shot effulgent arrows in all directions to vanquish the Kuru army. He succeeded in striking terror into the hearts of Duryodhana's soldiers. The shafts of the holder of Gandiva never fell upon anything other than the target and Kuru soldiers were severely distressed.

Then Arjun asked prince Uttar to take his chariot, driven by silver white steeds, towards Drona. He drove it with extraordinary speed and skill. Kripa shot several sharp arrows wounding Arjun, who then shot hundreds of arrows at Kripa. Finally, Partha cut off the bow and gloves of Kripa and the new ones taken by way of replacement were also cut off. Then Partha dislodged Kripa from his chariot, killed the charioteer and the horses. Thereafter, the Kuru soldiers took Kripa away from the battlefield in order to save his life. Drona then appeared before Arjun, all set and ready to fight. Arjun told prince Uttar that Drona was his preceptor, well-read in Vedas, who had mastered the art of weaponry. Then driving his chariot near Drona's car Bibhatsu saluted Drona and said respectfully that after suffering 13 years of exile, they wanted to take revenge. Still, Arjun would not strike at Drona until he shoots his arrows at Arjun first.

Drona showered hundreds of arrows at Arjun, but he cut these all. After that, the real encounter started between the two; both were heroic, gifted with immense energy, and were fully conversant with all kinds of weapons. While Drona was shooting sharp shafts at Arjun, he was also admiring Partha's skills in fighting against his preceptor. Drona then made use of celestial weapons and wounded Arjun. At that time, Arjun also shot some celestial weapons at Drona. He took Gandiva and covered Drona with thousands of weapons all around. At that stage son of Drona named Ashwatthama came to the forefront of the battlefield and shot hundreds of sharp arrows at Arjun. Turning his horses towards Ashwatthama, Arjun offered an opportunity to Drona to retreat. Ashwatthama gave a tough fight, wounded Arjun with his sharp arrows, and even cut the string of his Gandiva bow. Arjun then tied a fresh, strong string to his Gandiva and shot several arrows and cutting all his shafts on the way. Arjun let Ashwatthama exhaust his stock of arrows.

Then suddenly, Karna entered the battlefield with the twang of his bow. Leaving behind the son of Drona, Dhananjay rushed towards Karna. Arjun then challenged Karna saying that after fighting with him the battle that day, Karna would stop boasting before the elders and he would not even get an opportunity

to run away from the battlefield. Then there was a tremendous hair-stirring encounter between the two. Unable to bear the shower of arrows from Karna, Arjun cut off the string of his quiver and also cut off his bow into pieces. After that, Arjun killed the horses of Karna's chariot and shot one sharp shaft right into his breast. Experiencing great pain, Karna fled away from the battlefield.

Prince Uttar was bewildered and shell-shocked by looking at the way Arjun singlehandedly was fighting against those mighty heroes. He felt stupefied by looking at the slaughter of soldiers, by hearing the twang of the Gandiva bow and by beholding the dreadful performance of Arjun in the battlefield. Then Arjun told the prince to keep control over the horses of his chariot as he was going to display many more feats of unparalleled bravery. He lifted the spirits of Uttar by telling him that he was a brave prince born in the well-known race of Matsya, and he should see the divine weapons shot by him flashing like lightning in the sky. Then Arjun asked the prince to take him near Bhishma, who was standing there with a desire to fight against Arjun. Thus reassured by Savyasachin, prince Uttar took the chariot near the dreadful array of chariots protected by Bhishma. Then many powerful heroes fighting on behalf of Bhishma attacked Arjun with their shafts from all sides. Arjun attacked ferociously, and soon the battlefield was full of corpses, blood was flowing like water in the battlefield.

Watching their forces being vanquished, Duryodhana, Karna, Dushasan, Kripa, Drona, and Ashwatthama all rushed with anger towards Arjun and showered sharp shafts from all sides intending to kill him. At that time the mightiest bowman Arjun shot the Aindra weapon from his unfailing Gandiva, which covered all four directions with the arrows. All enemies were stunned, soldiers started running away under sheer despair. Then blowing his conch and cheering up the Kuru princes, Bhishma approached to fight against Arjun. There ensued a mighty and hair-raising encounter between Partha and Bhishma. All Kuru princes were cheering up Bhishma for waging such a ferocious battle against Arjun. The fantastic use of different types of divine weapons in that battle could not have been seen anywhere else. Arjun then cut off Bhishma's bow into pieces by shooting an arrow. He quickly lifted another one which was also cut into pieces by Bibhatsu. Arjun then severely wounded Bhishma; seeing him senseless, his charioteer drove him away.

Mad with anger, Duryodhana entered the battlefield and severely wounded Arjun on the forehead. Arjun then attacked Duryodhana so ferociously that he ran away from the battlefield wanting to save his life. However, Arjun taunted him calling him a coward, and he came back like a mad elephant to resume the war. Karna, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa also came back to resume their fight against Arjun.

Arjun shattered the arrows shot by them and finally shot Sammohana Astra from his Gandiva. All the Kuru warriors fainted and fell unconscious. After that, Arjun blew his conch Devdatta very loud. Then Arjun asked his charioteer, Prince Uttar, to go and remove white garments from the bodies of Drona and Kripa, yellow from Karna's body and blue garments from the bodies of Duryodhana and Ashwatthama. Uttar did as instructed. Arjun stood alone on the battlefield when Duryodhana and Bhishma regained consciousness. Duryodhana shouted that Bhishma should kill him immediately.

Bhishma then admonished Duryodhana saying that this was the difference between him and Arjun, as he would never abandon the path of virtue. If he had wanted, he could have killed all the big Kuru heroes, but he only made them unconscious; he did not kill them even when they were lying in that state. Duryodhana, however, felt deeply anguished at this humiliating defeat. When vanquished Kuru army was going back, Arjun saluted Bhishma and the preceptors by shooting arrows, which touched their feet. Arjun, however, cut the excellent gem studded in the crown off from Duryodhana's head by shooting an arrow.

After vanquishing entire Kuru army single-handedly, the victorious Arjun told Uttar to prepare for his victory march. The wealth and the cows, snatched by Kurus, had all been recovered and enemies had fled. Arjun first deposited back all the weapons on the Shami tree. After that, he removed his armour and gloves and again dressed as Brihannala assuming the role of a charioteer. Arjun sent messengers in advance to proclaim in the capital city that Prince Uttar had won a glorious victory while fighting against the Kuru forces. He also advised Prince Uttar not to sing praises of Arjun's valour as no one except him knew about Brihannala's true identity. He also wanted that King Virat should be very slowly made aware of the true identity of all the Pandavas.

CHAPTER 21

Bathed in glory, Pandavas revealed their identity in the assembly of king Virat

King Virat had come back after defeating Trigartas; therefore, he wanted to see his son Uttar immediately. He was told that in his absence Kurus had attacked Matsya from North and had also captured their cows. Therefore prince Uttar went to fight against them taking Brihannala as his charioteer. The king was worried and commanded all his forces to march immediately to assist the prince. Yudhishthir, known as Brahman Kanka to king Virata, however, tried to reassure the king saying that no harm could come to the Prince Uttar as Brihannala had gone as his charioteer and that prince would undoubtedly come back victorious. In the meantime, courtiers arrived with the news that Prince Uttar had defeated the Kaurava armies, recovered back the kine and was coming back victorious. That seemed to be too good to be true to the worried father, but Yudhishthir smilingly repeated that since Brihannala went out as charioteer, victory was inevitable.

This sounded very stupid to king Virat, but he was too happy to express any resentment. He was busy celebrating double victory; his own victory over Susharma and his son's glorious conquest over powerful Kuru forces. He had ordered public celebrations, special prayers, and music to salute bravery and triumph. He sent out ministers, soldiers, and beautiful maidens to welcome his victorious son. The king retired to his private apartment but unable to contain his joy he asked Yudhishthir to play the game of dice with him. They talked, and the king repeatedly spoke

about his son's greatness and prowess, but Yudhishthir again said that the prince was lucky to have a charioteer like Brihannala. The king got furious about this untimely and stupid-sounding glorification of a eunuch; he flung a dice at Yudhishthir's face and gave a tight slap. Blood started oozing from his face. Sairandhari wiped the blood with the edge of her garment and squeezed it in a golden cup saying that blood of a Sanyasin Brahman should never be allowed to spill on the ground as that is inauspicious.

Just at that time, the gatekeeper announced the arrival of prince and Brihannala. King got up in excitement to welcome his son and asked the gatekeepers to send them in immediately. Yudhishthir, however, whispered to the sentry that he should send only the prince and not Brihannala. Prince Uttar entered and bowed before his royal father. After that, he turned towards Kanka to pay obeisance to Kanka, the assumed name of Yudhishthir. He was horrified to see his bleeding face, and after knowing the reason, he persuaded his royal father to seek forgiveness from Kanka. After that embracing his son with pride and affection, king Virat wanted to know all the details of the war and how was his brave son able to defeat the mighty army of the Kuru kingdom. Uttar replied that he had neither vanquished any armies nor rescued any cows; an angel had done that work. The king could not believe his ears and wanted to see that angel immediately. Prince Uttar, however, replied that the angel had disappeared for the time being and would come again the very next day.

On the third day, the courtiers and leading citizens had assembled in the royal assembly hall to celebrate the victories of king Virat and prince Uttar. Brihannala by now had shared all the facts with the princess Uttara and gave her the precious garments removed from the bodies of Kuru heroes when they were lying unconscious. Kanka the courtier, Ballava the cook, Brihannala the eunuch, Granthik the keeper of horses and Tantripal the care-taker of cows; all had a bath, wore white clothes and adorned themselves with ornaments. They all looked royal and well-dressed; placing Yudhishthir in front of them, they all entered the assembly hall and occupied the seats meant for the princes. The king Virat entered and was stunned to see Kanka seated on the throne meant for a prince. He immediately remonstrated saying how a courtier could occupy the throne meant for a prince. Arjun quickly responded, saying that he was worthy of sharing a seat with Indra, he was an embodiment of virtue, foremost of powerful princes and had the most superior intellect in the world. He was Dharmaraj Yudhishthir, whose fame had spread in all directions like the rays of the sun.

King Virat was stunned to hear all this and then wanted to know about the identity of other Pandavas. Arjun then explained that cook Ballava was Bhima of

awful prowess, who had killed immoral Kichak. Nakul was Granthik, the keeper of horses, even though he was the most handsome and one of the bravest men in the world. Wise and erudite Sahadev was Tantripal, caretaker of cows. The lotus-eyed, beautiful princess Draupadi was working as Sairandhari. Finally, he introduced himself as Arjun. Then Arjun expressed his gratefulness to the king in whose kingdom they could safely spend one year of incognito living. After that the son of king Virat, prince Uttar described the unparalleled bravery of Arjun and then announced in open court that Arjun was that angel who had defeated the Kuru warriors and that he had never seen or heard about such super bowman anywhere in the world.

Prince Uttar then added that time had come for honouring the Pandavas, who were worthy of honour, respect and adoration. King Virat at that time said that Bhimasen had saved him when he was captured by Trigarta king Susharma during the battle. King Virat was so pleased that he repeatedly embraced all five Pandava brothers and said that, by good luck, they came safely after 12 years of exile to his kingdom. Then he added that by good luck they remained undiscovered by the wily sons of Dhritarashtra during one year of their stay in Viratanagar. Then King Virat proposed to make a gift of his kingdom to Yudhishthir, which was given back with thanks. King Virat also offered to get his daughter Uttara married to Arjun.

Yudhishthir responded by saying that they had great respect for the king and that they might be pardoned if they unwittingly had given any offence to the king. Arjun then responded saying that he had taught singing and dancing to the princess for one year and she always respected and confided in him treating him as his preceptor. As a result, he was more like a father to her; therefore, he would not transgress the moral boundary by getting married to her. He, however, was most willing to accept her as a bride for his son Abhimanyu, who was handsome, brave and had mastered all weapons. He was also the son of Lord Krishna's sister Subhadra and very dear to Janardan himself. With great excitement, King Virat responded that such an alliance between Matsyas and Pandavas would indeed be most welcome.

The preparations for solemnizing the marriage of Abhimanyu with Uttara started in right earnest. Invitations were sent to all the friends of Pandavas and Matsyas. Arjun went to Dwarka and brought Abhimanyu, Subhadra, Shri Krishna, and Balaram with many Yadava warriors. The kings of Kashi and Shaibya came there; each accompanied by an Akshauhini of a strong army. An Akshauhini in those days used to consist of 21870 chariots, 21870 elephants, 65610 horses and 109350 foot-soldiers (in all 218700). The King of Panchal, powerful Drupad, brought with him heroic sons of Draupadi and invincible Shikhandin. Draupadi's brother

Dhrishtadhyumna, a great warrior and an expert in weaponry had also reached along with an Akshauhini of soldiers. Indrasena also came with his forces.

The wedding ceremony was formally conducted. Yudhishthir and his brothers extended a warm welcome to all the kings, warriors, and princes. Arjun accepted princess Uttara as the bride of his son Abhimanyu in the presence of Lord Krishna. King Virat presented enormous wealth as dowry, which included chariots, horses, elephants, and valuables. Lord Krishna, being the brother of Abhimanyu's mother, had brought valuable presents which included costly garments, jewellery, chariots, elephants, and maids *etc.* There were celebrations all around, and people were singing and dancing. Yudhishthir gave immense wealth in charity to Brahmans and the poor.

CHAPTER 22

Lord Krishna consulted many kings for facilitating the restoration of his kingdom back to Yudhishthir

On completion of the 13th year of incognito living, Pandavas settled openly in Upaplavya, a decent place within the territory of Matsya kingdom. After having enjoyed the wedding celebrations of Abhimanyu and Uttara, all the kings and princes, who had come from distant places, assembled in the court of king Virat. Abhimanyu sat in the company of Prince Uttar; he was at that time around 25 years old. All the five sons of Draupadi, looking handsome and valiant, were seated on unique golden chairs. Lord Krishna then stood up and addressed the assembly recollecting the sequence of events leading to the defeat of Emperor Yudhishthir in the game of dice through deceit. He further added that the sons of Kunti, accompanied by Draupadi, had complied with all the conditions of wager. They had lived for 12 years in exile and had successfully completed 13th year of incognito living in the redemption of their pledged word, yet their kingdom had not been restored back to them.

Lord Krishna further told the assembly that virtuous Yudhishthir was not desirous of having even the kingdom of gods wrongfully, but then his rightful share must be got given to him, and he must get back that kingdom of Dvaitavana, with its capital at Indraprastha, back from Kurus. Lord Krishna added that the kings and princes assembled there must deliberate what peaceful means could be

adopted to get their kingdom given back to Pandavas. He expressed the view that there was a need to send an upright emissary to Duryodhana to persuade him to honour the terms of the wager and give back Indraprastha to the Pandavas. However, if Duryodhana still did not agree and a peaceful settlement could not be reached, then preparations for war needed to be made.

Lord Krishna's elder brother Shri Balaram then got up and added that the messenger sent to the Kuru king must be a noble person who should speak in a conciliatory tone, with a desire to avoid war at any cost. The envoy should be able to get the co-operation of Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarashtra, and Vidur and he should in no way give way to anger as the war had to be avoided at any cost. Balaram at that time also added that fully aware of the consequences, Yudhishthir had engaged himself in the game of dice with Shakuni against advice from friends and well-wishers; he staked his kingdom and lost it. Consequently, he could not make a legal claim to his kingdom but could only persuade the Kuru princes to do so on moral grounds and in the interest of peaceful settlement. While making this statement, Balaram certainly was not aware of the full facts and the terms of the wager. When Yudhishthir came back to play the game of dice again, the stake was specified by Shakuni as under (Sabha Parva, 2/76/10-14) -

"If you defeat us at dice, we (Kaurava Princes) shall enter the forest attired in deerskins and then live there for twelve years and pass the thirteenth year in some inhabited place unrecognized. If recognized, we shall return to the exile of another twelve years. If on the other hand you are defeated by us, you shall with Draupadi, live for twelve years in the forest and pass the whole of the thirteenth year unrecognized in a populated country. If recognized, the exile of another twelve years is to be the consequence. **On the expiry of the thirteenth year, each is to have his kingdom surrendered to the other."**

Thus restoring the kingdom to Yudhishthir after completion of 13 years was integral to the prefixed stake and Duryodhana was obliged to give back the same. Refusal to do so would have been another deception of which war could have been the only consequence. Powerful Yadava hero Satyaki found the stand taken by Balaram as intolerable and repulsive. He stood up and spoke indignantly saying that the position taken by Balaram was disgusting, as no amount of skill can convert injustice into justice. Both Kauravas and Pandavas were of royal heritage; Pandavas were truthful and noble, whereas Kauravas were vicious and cruel. They did not defeat Yudhishthir in any battle but resorted to treachery by persuading him to play the rigged game of dice. Even then, after having lost, Yudhishthir and his brothers kept the promise and completed 12 years of living in the forest and 12 months of living incognito.

At this stage, Satyaki added forcefully that Yudhishthir was entitled to get his kingdom back, and there was no need to plead before wily Duryodhana, who was most dishonestly questioning even their living in the forest and living incognito during 13th year. If Duryodhana was unwilling to restore Yudhishthir's kingdom, then war was the only course of action. Very valiantly, Satyaki announced that he wholeheartedly agreed with Lord Krishna and that he would fight against the Kuru villains in a battle. If Duryodhana desired war, let him have it and face the consequences.

Satyaki's words provided much relief to King Drupada, whose daughter Draupadi had been subjected to such degrading humiliation before the Kuru assembly. He opined that even though a messenger must be sent to negotiate a peaceful settlement but he did not expect crafty Duryodhana to agree to any reasonable solution. Therefore, in the meantime, the preparations for war also should be made. He suggested that quick messengers must be sent to King Shalya of Madradesh, and King Dhrishtaketu of Kekayas. Messengers should also request kings of Balhika, Chedis, Subahu, and Kalingas to fight on behalf of Pandavas. King Drupad finally added that an envoy should quickly be sent to Hastinapur to know the mind of Duryodhana.

Shri Krishna at this stage stood up and said that course of action as proposed by wise king Drupad should be adopted without delay; that he himself, along with Balaram, would go back to Dwarka. If Duryodhana due to his wickedness and vanity does not accept a peaceful settlement and wished to be vanquished by Arjun in the battle, then send them a message in Dwarka. King Virat extended a very warm farewell to Lord Krishna; Yudhishthir, on the other hand, started making preparations for war. Drupada sent his priest to Hastinapur to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Drupada felt that if, with the help of Vidur and Drona, the priest was able to negotiate a settlement, that would be a miraculous achievement.

After sending messengers to different kings to seek their support, Arjun then himself went to Dwarka to meet Shri Krishna personally. Through his spies, Duryodhana had known about the preparations being made by Pandavas. Duryodhana also deputed his messengers to seek the support of various kings during the war and then he himself left for Dwarka to meet Shri Krishna. Both Arjun and Duryodhana reached Dwarka at about the same time and went straight to Krishna's bedroom as he was asleep. Duryodhana sat near the head of Lord Krishna, and Arjun stood near his feet. Having awakened, the king of Vrishnis first saw Arjun and greeted him, and after that, he greeted Duryodhana as well. Duryodhana spoke first and asserted that he had reached first and, therefore, keeping in view the tradition, Madhav should help Duryodhana in war. Lord

Krishna assured that he would help both—on one side, he alone unarmed would act as a charioteer and, on the other, would be his powerful Narayani Sena. Dhananjay chose Krishna, who was to only act as a charioteer of Arjun whereas Duryodhana was happy to accept the support of a mighty army of Lord Krishna. After that Duryodhana went ahead to seek the support of other kings whereas Arjun, accompanied by Lord Krishna, reported back to Yudhishthir in Upaplavya.

CHAPTER 23

Seven Akshauhini of forces assemble to support Yudhishthir, and eleven Akshauhini gather to prop up Duryodhana

Shalya, the ruler of Madradesh and maternal Uncle of Nakul and Sahadev, heard that the Pandavas were camping in Upaplavya and making preparations for war with the Kurus. He left with his Akshauhini strong army to extend support to his Pandava nephews. Shalya was known as a formidable warrior, and Duryodhana somehow wanted to win him over to his side. Therefore, he hatched a conspiracy of extending extraordinary warm and lavish hospitality. Duryodhana asked his men to construct lavish guest houses, serve sumptuous, delicious food to Shalya and his army. Shalya was extremely pleased with that generosity, which he accepted thinking that Yudhishthir was extending that kind of lavish hospitality. Then one day, a resting place appropriate for gods with divine hospitality was offered by Duryodhana's men to the Matsya King.

Shalya was so incredibly pleased with that heavenly generosity that he told the attendants that he wanted to reward the attendants who had served him so well. Duryodhana, who was so far moving unobserved grasped the opportunity and appeared before Shalya, saying that he felt honoured at Shalya accepting hospitality from Kauravas. Greatly moved, Shalya enquired how he could pay back his warm hospitality. Duryodhana quickly replied that he wanted Shalya and his forces to fight from his side. Shalya at that time was so overwhelmed and flattered with

Duryodhana's hospitality that he promised his support to Duryodhana. This must be the only example in history when a valiant maternal uncle left with his army to extend support to his much persecuted virtuous nephews and just because of hospitality, changed sides and agreed to fight on behalf of the wicked persecutors of his nephews!

Shalya then addressed Duryodhana, saying that he would keep his word of fighting from his side during the war, but he would come back after meeting Yudhishthir. The Pandavas extended a warm welcome to their maternal Uncle Shalya; Nakul and Sahadev were thrilled to see him accompanied by his powerful forces. Presuming that Shalya had come to fight on their behalf, Pandavas started narrating their hardships and sufferings on account of wily Duryodhana. Shalya at that time intervened and narrated the story of his promise of support to Duryodhana. Yudhishthir at once realized that it was wrong on his part to take support from Shalya for granted. Concealing his disappointment, Yudhishthir told Shalya that he expected him to keep his promise of fighting on behalf of Duryodhana during the war. Yudhishthir, however, sought one promise from his Uncle saying that he would surely act as Karna's charioteer during the war when Karna would attempt to take away the life of Arjun. At that time Shalya should try to save Arjun's life by demoralizing Karna through chanting praises of Arjun. Shalya promised to do so and apologized to Yudhishthir for acting unfairly on being tricked by Duryodhana into a situation by extending extra-ordinary lavish hospitality.

After the departure of Shalya, Warrior king Yuyudhana (Satyaki) of Satvata race came along with one Akshauhini Chaturangini Sena promising support to Yudhishthir. Thereafter came Dhrishtaketu, powerful king of Chedis with his one Akshauhini chaturangini army, ready to vanquish the Kauravas in the great battle. After that came Jayatasena, son of Jarasandh, king of Magadh with another one Akshauhini of his heroic forces, whose prowess was known far and wide. Next came Drupada along with his heroic sons Dhrishtadhyumna and Shikhandin. The King Virat of Matsya and his warrior sons also offered whole-hearted support of their forces to Yudhishthir. A very large number of forces came from several locations and assembled around Upaplavya. In this manner, Pandavas gathered the support of seven Akshauhini carrying flags of various kingdoms.

On the other hand, the sons of Dhritarashtra managed to win the support of eleven Akshauhini forces. Kings Bhagadatta and Bhurishrava brought one Akshauhini each. Kritavarman brought another one Akshauhini. The armies of heroic Jayadratha came from Sindhu-Sauvira, shaking the earth while they were marching. The ruler of Kamboj, supported by Yavanas and Shakas, brought another

Box 2

In Shanti Parva of Mahabharat, it has been laid down that the king should adopt five fold policy – ***sama*** (friendly persuasion), ***dama*** (allurement), **danda** (punishment), ***bheda*** (divide) and ***upeksha*** (ignore), according to the need. Therefore maintaining army was the primary duty of a kingdom.

During Mahabharat times, a four-division army (***chaturangini sena***), comprising ***Padati*** (infantry), ***Ashvarohi*** (horse-riders), ***Gajarudha*** (elephant-riders), and ***Rathi*** (chariot-riders), was built up in nine steps, more or less similar to the modern army. From the smallest unit to the biggest unit ancient names used in Mahabharat are listed here with the names of modern units in the bracket –

Patti (Unit), ***Senamukha*** (Section), ***Gulma*** (Platoon), ***Gana*** (Company), ***Vahini*** (Battalion), ***Prtana*** (Brigade), ***Chamu*** (Division), ***Anikini*** (Core) And ***Akshauhini*** (Command).

Patti consisted of one chariot (***Ratha***), one elephant (***Gaja***), three horses (***Ashvarohis***) and five infantry soldiers (***Padati***).

Senamukha was built of three ***Pattis,***

Gulma of three ***Senamukhas,***

Gana consisted of three ***Gulmas,***

Vahini of three ***Ganas,***

Prtana of three V***ahinis,***

Chamu consisted of three ***Prtanas,***

Anikini of three ***Chamus,*** and

Akshauhini consisted of ***ten Anikini-s.***

Thus the strength of fighter personnel in an Akshauhini was 21870 *Rathis* (10 x 3 x 3 x 3 x 3 x 3 x 3) + ***21870 Gajarudha*** + 65610 (21,870 x 3) ***Ashvarohis*** + 109350 (21870 x 5) ***Padati***. That means the total number of fighters in one ***Akshauhini*** was 218,700 (two lakhs, eighteen thousand seven hundred); non-combative service personnel like charioteer (S***arathi***), elephant-driver (***Gaja-vahaka***), etc., were over and above that number. Eighteen such A*akshauhinis* fought in ***The Mahabharat War*** (Bhishma Parva 6/19/7). Great warriors on chariots were called ***maharathis*** (extra-ordinary brave warriors) and ***atirathi*** (very brave warriors). The examples of Maharathis were Drona, Bhisma, Arjuna and Karna.

The structure was thus quite similar to that of the modern army; Section consisting of 10 personnel was the smallest unit. A Platoon was composed of three sections, whereas a Company consisted of three Platoons. Four Companies constituted a Battalion whereas a Brigade consisted of three infantry Battalions along with various support elements and commanded by a Brigadier. A Division (chamu) in modern days consists of 3-4 Brigades, whereas 3 to 4 divisions constitute a Core. Two or more Cores comprise a Command; There are several Commands which are placed under the chief of the army staff, assisted by other senior officers at the headquarters.

(Reference - Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume VI, Pg. 360, Publisher - India Heritage Research Foundation, in association with Rupa & co.)

one Akshauhini hoping to defeat Pandavas in the battle. The kings of Mahishmati and Avanti, surrounded by large valiant forces also reached to support Duryodhana. The courageous rulers of Kekayas also brought one Akshauhini with the desire to defeat brave sons of Kunti in war. By adding one Akshauhini each from Shalya and Saurashtra area under Kritavarman, the strength of forces supporting Duryodhana went up to 11 Akshauhini, up against only seven Akshauhini of Yudhishthir.There was no space left in Hastinapur for the soldiers even to stand. In those days one Akshauhini consisted of 21870 chariots, an equal number of elephants, 65610 horse riders and 109350 foot soldiers. (See Box 2)

In the meantime, the priest of Drupada reached Hastinapur; he greeted Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, and Vidura. After that, the envoy conveyed the message on behalf of Pandavas saying that sons of Dhritarashtra obtained their paternal kingdom, but sons of Pandu were not given their share. An attempt was made to kill all the Pandus in the wax palace, but they survived. After Arjun won Draupadi in Swayamvar, the sons of Pandu were given backward forest area named Khandavaprastha as their half share of the kingdom. The Pandavas developed even this forest area into a prosperous kingdom with their own prowess and intelligence. However, even that was taken away by a trick devised through the deceitful game of dice. After that, the sons of Kunti were made to go through unbearable troubles, living in the forests for twelve years and afterwards living incognito for twelve months in the kingdom of Virat. Now was the time when their kingdom must be restored to them as per the terms of the wager. Those powerful Pandava heroes were keen on a peaceful settlement.

Bhishma responded by saying that the envoy had spoken the whole truth and he appreciated the valour of Arjun who was capable of defeating vast enemy forces single-handed. Filled with anger, Karna intervened to say that Duryodhana would not yield an inch of land to Pandavas and that they should go and live for another 12 years in the forest as they were recognized before the expiry of the 13th year. Dhritarashtra intervened at that stage and told the envoy that he would send Sanjay to Pandavas with a proposal for a peaceful settlement. The priest of king Drupada went back to Pandavas.

CHAPTER 24

Sanjay went as an ambassador to Pandavas, but Duryodhana did not want any peaceful settlement

Dhritarashtra thereafter called Sanjay aside and instructed him to go to Pandavas as an emissary. He instructed Sanjay to convey affectionate regards of the Kuru King to all of them. Without offering anything concrete, Dhritarashtra asked Sanjay to speak in such a conciliatory manner that the war is avoided. Sanjay went to Yudhishthir and conveyed greetings as well as blessings on behalf of Dhritarashtra, saying that the Kuru king detested any talk of war and was desirous of having peace. Feeling a little reassured, Dharmaputra said that only if their kingdom is returned to them, they would forget all atrocities and would live in peace with the Kurus. Sanjay responded saying that the sons of Dhritarashtra continue to remain mean and wicked; disregarding the advice of their father and grandsire. They were not willing to give back their kingdom to the Pandavas. However, Dhritrashtra believed that Yudhishthir and other sons of Pandu were wise and virtuous. Therefore, they should have patience and not commence any hostilities as, even if the whole earth were gained by killing ones' own kith and kin, no peace or prosperity is attained. Yudhishthir requested Lord Krishna to advise about the future course, which should be followed.

Shri Krishna said that he desired the prosperity of both Pandavas and Kauravas. However, it was surprising that after committing so many atrocities on Pandavas,

Dhritarashtra had not even offered to restore their kingdom by honouring the conditions of wager of the game of dice. He had merely sent a piece of advice that they should remain peaceful. Krishna reminded Sanjay that supporting his wily sons, Dhritarashtra attempted to kill the sons of Kunti in Varanavat. Subsequently, he robbed them of their kingdom and forced them to live like beggars for 13 years. He violated the principles of dharma, ethics and royal conduct by depriving the Pandavas of their just inheritance. Under no circumstances, the valiant Pandavas should allow someone to take away what rightfully belonged to them; getting killed to defend their just claim would be more praiseworthy for the Pandavas.

Krishna reminded Sanjay of the heinous crime committed against Draupadi by dragging her before the assembly when elders and kings sat still and silent. Then Shri Krishna said that Duryodhana was like a big tree full of malice, Karna was the trunk and Shakuni its branch. Dushasana was like its fruits, and the king Dhritarashtra himself was its root. On the other hand, Yudhishthir was like a big tree full of virtue, Arjun its trunk and Bhimasen was like its branch, Nakul and Sahadev were its fruits, whereas its roots consisted of gods and Brahmanas. After going through endless suffering inflicted on them by Dhritarashtra, the virtuous sons of Pandu were now prepared to engage in war and were fully prepared for the same. Arjun added that both he and Shri Krishna alone could destroy Duryodhana and his followers' root and branch. His Gandiva was itching to shoot some arrows to annihilate the Kuru forces. In the end, Krishna said that Sanjay might place the two alternatives before the king, peace and war, of which Dhritarashtra may choose any.

After knowing the mind of Lord Krishna, still desirous of following the path of peace and virtue, Yudhishthir advised Sanjay to report back to Dhritarashtra and convey greetings and regards from Pandavas to him, to the grandsire and Vidur. Sanjay should plead before them on behalf of Pandavas that there was enough room in the world for both Kauravas and Pandavas to live peacefully. Therefore they must find a just and fair solution. Yudhishthir advised Sanjay to take Duryodhana aside and convey the message that he forced the Pandu princes to live in the forest, their weeping royal wife was dragged before the assembly; the sons of Pandu had tolerated all those atrocities. At least now, he should give back what lawfully belonged to the Pandavas by restoring their kingdom to them as per the terms of the wager. However, if Duryodhana was not willing to do even this, then in the interest of peace, he should give just one village each to each of the five Pandu princes. The names of villages suggested were Avisthala, Vrikasthala, Makandi, Varanavat, and any other fifth village. Then there would be peace amongst the cousins and Panchals would also join the Kurus.

After dispatching Sanjay as an envoy to Pandu princes, Dhritarashtra was restless and could not get even a wink of sleep. Therefore, he called Vidura and spent the whole night talking to him. Vidur then explained to Dhritarashtra, the qualities of a wise man. A wise man would never renounce truth, charity, hard work, benevolence, forgiveness, and patience. He should always shun fear, anger, laziness, and procrastination. A king who avoids wine, women and gambling, who shuns desire and spite and distributes wealth among deserving parties is known to be wise. Dhritarashtra then wanted to know how a sleepless man, burning with anxiety, could get some sleep and some relief.

Vidur then replied that a king must act in a just and fair manner; the care bestowed on depriving someone else of his kingdom should be spent on nurturing one's own kingdom. Vidur finally advised that in order to get his peace of mind, Dhritarashtra must give back to Pandavas their share of the kingdom as after the death of their father Pandu they always treated Dhritarashtra like their own father. Vidur then reminded Dhritarashtra that after having entrusted his kingdom to wicked-minded Duryodhana, Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni, he could neither hope for any peace nor prosperity. The children of a deceased brother must be protected and nurtured even if they are devoid of good qualities, whereas Pandavas were noble and virtuous and if they were given their due, the Kuru king would have peace of mind. Virtue must not be forsaken out of desire, fear or temptation, said Vidur. In this way, the king, hearing the discourse of wise Vidur, passed that night.

In the morning, Sanjay sent in a message; all the Kurus and their friends, headed by Dhritarashtra, entered the Council Chamber to hear the signal from the sons of Kunti. Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Shalya, Jayadratha, and Vidur were present. Duryodhana, Karna, Shakuni were also present along with other Kuru princes. Sanjay then conveyed the message of Arjun to Duryodhana, saying that there was still time to make peace and give Pandavas their due. Otherwise, the Kuru princes would repent for engaging in war with Arjun and Bhimasen. If Pandavas rise in revolt against Kurus for all the humiliation and misery piled by them on Yudhishthir, Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, Sahadev and Draupadi and decide to take revenge, then all the Kuru heroes would get defeated and killed. When heavenly blow of Krishna's conch Panchajanya is combined with the sharp arrows shot from Arjun's bow Gandiva, then Duryodhana would repent for engaging in war. Bhishma at that time extolled the combined invincibility of Arjun and Krishna and wanted that a peaceful settlement must be reached. Karna, however, intervened to say that he was capable of killing all five sons of Pandu in the battle. Bhishma then responded saying that every time he boasted of such prowess, but in time of need he could do nothing, for example when Gandharvas captured Duryodhana or

when Kuru forces had attacked Viratanagar, Karna did not prove equal to even one-sixteenth of Arjun.

When Dhritarashtra wanted to know who would fight on behalf of Pandavas, Sanjay narrated a long list. He said that five unparalleled Pandava warriors, who had practically won the whole world would fight, invincible Krishna would fight on their behalf, unbeatable Abhimanyu would fight on behalf of Pandavas. Even the five noble and brave sons of Draupadi were ready to wage war against the Kurus. The kings of Panchal, Matsya, Kashi, Chedi, and Magadh would fight on behalf of Pandavas. Amba reborn as Shikhandin and Dhrishtadhyumna, known to have been born to vanquish Drona, would also fight on behalf of Pandavas. Finally, Sanjay reminded everyone about the supreme prowess of Arjun, who had saved Duryodhana from the clutches of Gandharvas and had vanquished the entire army of Kurus when they had attacked Matsya. He reminded that the great Pandava heroes had repeatedly been wronged. Even half share in the ancestral kingdom of Bharatas known as Kuru Jangal had not been given back to them even though that was their birthright. Arjun, Bhima, Nakul, and Sahadev were all itching to take revenge. Kuru princes, headed by Duryodhana, would surely be destroyed by the brave and courageous Arjun and Bhima.

Duryodhana at that time, stood up and told Dhritarashtra not to worry about the safety of his sons as they were brave enough to defend themselves. He added that after knowing about 11 Akshauhini of the army in support of Kauravas, Pandavas have practically accepted defeat. That is why Yudhishthir, afraid of his prowess, was foregoing all claims to his kingdom and was begging for only five villages. There is no need to be afraid of Bhima because, in a fight with the mace, no one in the world could challenge Duryodhana. There was no reason to be frightened of superior bowman ship of Arjun because Kuru side had so many powerful heroes including Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna, and Ashwatthama.

Realizing that Duryodhana was being foolish as well as overconfident, Dhritrashtra advised that war was to be avoided at any cost and that Pandavas should be given their due. Duryodhana, however, reiterated that supported by Karna and Dushasana, he would kill all the five sons of Pandu. Duryodhana finally concluded saying that he was willing to lose his kingdom and even his life, but he did not wish to live in peace with the sons of Pandu. Dhritarashtra then gave final warning that if peace were not concluded with the Pandavas, Duryodhana and his other sons would surely get killed at the hands of the sons of Pandu. Finally, Sanjay also briefed the assembly about whatever was said by Lord Krishna, who had made it clear that the sons of Kunti had tolerated injustice for a very long time. If their kingdom or even half of the ancestral kingdom is not

returned to them, then war was the only option in which Kuru princes would get defeated and destroyed.

Dhritarashtra got even more frightened about the security of his sons and wanted them to enter into a peaceful settlement with the sons of Kunti. Duryodhana at that time blew his own trumpet very loud saying that he was of superior intelligence, superior might and superior prowess as compared to that of Pandavas and he had no doubt that he would be able to annihilate them. Karna intervened to tell Dhritarashtra to have Bhishma and Drona for his company as he would go along with Duryodhana and wipe out Pandavas and their forces. When all these discussions were going on, Gandhari and sage Vyas came there. Sage Vyas told Sanjay to describe the superior prowess of Lord Krishna. Sanjay explained that the disc (Sudarshan Chakra) possessed by Madhav had divine qualities and he could use them anywhere, at any time and in any form. If the entire world is placed on one side and Janardan on the other, then Janardan would surpass the whole world. Janardan is also invincible because he was always on the side of righteousness and dharma. Sanjay added that Krishna's brilliance combined with Arjun's prowess was like a combination of Narayan and Nar, which could annihilate the whole world. Even then, Duryodhana was adamant and was not willing to listen to the advice given by his mother Gandhari to abandon the path of war.

CHAPTER 25

Lord Krishna went as an ambassador of peace to the court of Kurus

After Sanjay left Upaplavya for Hastinapur to report back to Dhritarashtra, Yudhishthir, along with other sons of Kunti, started conversing with Lord Krishna seeking his unstinted support as well as valuable advice. He said that Sanjay was like Dhritarashtra's alter ego; from his speech, it was clear that the Kuru King is trying to secure peace without giving back to them their own kingdom and, in fact, without offering them any territory whatsoever. Dhritarashtra was not playing fair with the sons of Pandu, and he had only conveyed the message that even if Duryodhana refused to give them any territory, they should remain meek and weak, and they should not resort to any hostilities. The crisis was approaching, and sons of Kunti had none to protect them except Janardan.

Yudhishthir after that revealed that he had finally made an offer that they would be content with only five villages, but he apprehended that Duryodhana would reject even that offer. These villages were Avisthala, Vrikasthala, Makandi, Varanavat and any other (Udyog Parva, 5/72/15). He was distraught at the prospect of resorting to war, as that would mean killing his own cousins, grandsire, and preceptors. Yudhishthir opined that war was evil and enmity is never turned into peace by hostility. Yudhishthir found himself in a dilemma as he did not want to lead the life of a beggar losing even his own share in his ancestral property and, at the same time, he did not wish to kill members of his own family.

After the death of their father Pandu, all Pandavas came and lived in Hastinapur, and they treated Dhritarashtra with great respect. Still, the Kuru king had such a strong affection for his son Duryodhana that, at his instance, he agreed to commit any number of atrocities on the sons of Kunti. Even now, Yudhishthir did not expect any justice or fair play from the Kuru king. Shri Krishna at that time offered that for the good of both Kurus and Pandus and for bringing Yudhishthir out of that predicament, he would himself go to Hastinapur and would do his best to secure rights of the sons of Kunti without resorting to war. Yudhishthir got worried apprehending that wily Duryodhana might try to cause some harm when Shri Krishna is found alone in the palace of Kurus. Since Lord Krishna was their only friend and saviour, they did not want to jeopardize his safety. Shri Krishna, however, replied that he was aware that crafty Duryodhana could go to any extent, but no stone should be left unturned to reach a peaceful settlement. Krishna assured Yudhishthir that a messenger is never subjected to any bodily harm, but if Kauravas try to do so, then Shri Krishna was capable of reducing them to ashes.

Yudhishthir then concluded saying that Lord Krishna knew the minds of Pandavas and that they would happily accept whatever is settled by Shri Krishna, even though it may be very little. All the bad omens did portend war, but Yudhishthir was still keen on negotiating peace. Janardan at that time added that maintaining peace with Pandavas was neither desirable nor expedient for Kuru princes as they know that whatever injustice they perpetuate on Pandu princes, they had the support of Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and other powerful elders. Neither the Kurus not the elders had any repentance when they made the valiant princes wear the deerskin and when they saw Draupadi being dragged by the hair before the assembly. Therefore, Pandavas needed to stop showing any affection for these elders as Krishna was anticipating war wherein these elders would participate to defeat and kill the virtuous and righteous sons of Pandu.

Before departing for Hastinapur from Upaplavya, Madhav had long discussions with each of the Pandavas. Most surprisingly, even Bhima plumped for a peaceful settlement as he did not want the entire Kuru race to get wiped out. He did apprehend that Duryodhana would not agree to give Yudhishthir his due; therefore, he requested Lord Krishna to appeal to the good sense of elders so that there was peace between the sons of Pandu and offspring of Kuru. When Krishna expressed wonder at such meek words uttered by Bhima, he explained that he had no fear of all the worlds moving with wrath against him, but he was willing to withstand all kinds of troubles to save the Bharata race from annihilation.

Arjun too spoke in a highly conciliatory tone. He said that Shri Krishna should not go with the belief that negotiating peace with unjust and wicked Duryodhana

was impossible because Pandavas were ready to forego their due share and were willing to settle for very little to avoid war with their own cousins. Arjun added that his blood boils when he recollects the cruel humiliation piled on Draupadi before the Kuru Assembly, yet he wanted that there was need for making sincere efforts to negotiate peace, adding that whatever was decided by Shri Krishna would be accepted by the Pandavas. Krishna responded by saying that Duryodhana would prefer death, rather than to live at peace with Pandavas. Actually, this offer of peace should have been made by Bhishma, when about a year back he had accompanied Kuru forces for an attack on Viratanagar. Bhishma did not make any such offer and Arjun alone fought and vanquished those forces. All these months, why did not Bhishma or Dhritarashtra make any efforts to get the Pandavas given their due?

Sahadev was more straight and honest in expressing his opinion. He said that after seeing Draupadi being dragged by the hair in the Kuru Assembly, his wrath towards Duryodhana would get appeased only after killing him and that he surely wanted to engage in war with the Kurus. Satyaki supported him wholeheartedly. Watching that king Yudhishthir was reluctant to engage in a battle with Kurus even if they failed to restore his kingdom, Draupadi expressed her anguish and grief. She then recollected before Krishna, the scion of Dasharhas, the cruel humiliation piled on her by Duryodhana and his accomplices after deceiving and defeating Yudhishthir in the game of dice. She was dragged by the hair when she was having a single cloth on her body as she was in her season. All this was done in front of her father-in-law, Dhritarashtra and her grandfather-in-law, Bhishma. They neither prevented nor lamented at such demeaning treatment meted out to their daughter-in-law before the Kuru Assembly.

A deeply anguished Draupadi added that if Yudhishthir, Bhima, Arjun were not willing to avenge the humiliation piled on her by the Kurus, then her five sons, placing valiant Abhimanyu in front, would fight against the Kauravas. They would tear off that hand from Dushasana with which he had dragged her to the assembly. For 13 years, twenty-four hours a day and seven days weak, she had been waiting for that revenge, and now her husbands say that they would not fight against their immoral wicked cousins. Draupadi after that started sobbing and her voice got choked with tears. Shri Krishna then tried to console Draupadi saying that very soon she would see the Kuru princes killed and their ladies weeping.

In the month of Kartika and in Revati Nakshatra (Udyog Parva/5/83/7), Shri Krishna, accompanied by Satyaki, left Upaplavya for Hastinapur with a desire to accomplish his peace mission. Pandavas went behind him for some distance and then Yudhishthir pleaded with him to meet their mother Kunti and enquire about

her well being. He also wanted Shri Krishna to tell their mother Kunti that all her children were safe and in good health. On the way, Shri Krishna stayed for the night in Vrikasthala, where Duryodhana had made lavish arrangements with a desire to win Lord Krishna on his side. Shri Krishna, however, did not even look at those lavish arrangements.

After learning that Janardan had left for Hastinapur and was staying for the night in Vrikasthala, Dhritarashtra started preparations for a hearty welcome. He wanted to present to him many golden chariots, horses from Balhika, soft blankets, precious gems *etc.* and he wanted the Kuru princes and prominent citizens to go ahead and extend a hearty welcome to him. Vidur advised Dhritarashtra to enter into the peaceful settlement as per Shri Krishna's advice. Duryodhana intervened to say that there was no need for extending such luxurious courtesy and that he had plans to make Krishna a captive. Hearing these words, Dhritrashtra felt oppressed with pain, whereas Bhishma felt disgusted and anguished.

In the morning, Lord Krishna left Vrikasthala and soon reached the palace of Dhritarashtra where the king extended a formal and hearty welcome. After that, Shri Krishna went to Vidur's abode to meet him and Kunti. On seeing Krishna, Vidur told him that it was unlikely that Duryodhana would allow any peaceful settlement. His arrogance was due to the belief that he was invincible as Bhishma and Drona were always on his side and would fight on his behalf. Vidur also warned Krishna to be careful as Duryodhana was planning to either make him captive or take his life.

Lord Krishna went to meet his father's sister Kunti, who had lived separated from her sons for 14 years. Remembering her sons, Kunti lamented that they always followed the path of virtue, but were deprived of their kingdom. Kuru elders never extended their protection and support to which they were entitled. One by one Kunti remembered her brave sons and then lamented for the treatment meted out to noble princess Draupadi. Kunti also recollected her sorrows since childhood. She remembered with bitterness that the grandfather of Shri Krishna had given her away to his friend King Kuntibhoj. She then recalled that when Arjun was born, a celestial voice told her that he would be the conqueror of the world. Even her widowhood was not so much painful as was the separation for 14 years from her sons. Kunti wanted Shri Krishna to convey to Yudhishthir that death is better for a Kshatriya than living under the protection of others. He should either regain his kingdom or lay down his life. Shri Krishna then comforted Kunti, saying that she would soon see her sons victorious and prosperous.

After bidding adieu to Kunti, Shri Krishna went to the palace of Duryodhana, who was sitting with Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni. After extending a formal welcome, Duryodhana invited Shri Krishna over dinner, but the invitation was declined. Duryodhana demanded to know the reasons for rejecting the request. Shri Krishna replied that Duryodhana had remained malicious against the virtuous Pandavas for no fault on their part. Anyone who bears malice against Pandavas is not dear to Shri Krishna and foods offered by such person are defiled by wickedness. Therefore, he had decided to take food provided only by Vidur.

After having dinner with Vidur, Krishna talked about the vanity of wicked-minded Duryodhana who would not listen to any sound advice even from his own elders and well-wishers. Vidur revealed to Krishna that Duryodhana and his accomplices have already decided that they would not give back their just dues to Pandavas and were, in fact, keen to engage in a war. Therefore, Vidur told Krishna that there was no use of talking about a peaceful settlement. Vidur emphasized that this confidence of Duryodhana was due to the belief that Pandavas were incapable of fighting against Bhishma and Drona in war. Vidur added that unfortunately, these two would surely fight on behalf of Duryodhana, even if they were taking the side of adharma and injustice.

All the events leading to the outbreak of Mahabharat war make it more than clear that the real reason behind Mahabharat war was assured unstinted support from Bhishma and Drona to Duryodhana even if he was on the side of immorality, adharma and injustice. Shri Krishna revealed that when he came on a peace mission, he also did not have any hopes of success due to the mean-mindedness of the sons of Dhritarashtra, but he wanted to prove it to the world that every possible effort was made to prevent war by submitting very fair and reasonable proposals before the Kuru princes. Vidur told Shri Krishna that Duryodhana aspired to be the supreme lord of a very extensive empire on earth without any rival anywhere. Krishna responded by saying that he wanted to discharge the duty of a friend of Kurus and Pandus by making efforts to prevent war between those cousins. If sons of Dhritarashtra fail to listen to his sound advice, they would face the consequences and repent later-on.

Next morning, Duryodhana and Shakuni came to invite Shri Krishna to the Assembly Hall where Dhritarashtra and Bhishma were already waiting for him. Shri Krishna then mounted his chariot driven by Daruka and reached the Assembly Hall followed by Vidur and Duryodhana. He was welcomed with a standing ovation by Dhritarashtra, Kuru elders and all assembled kings. They all looked at the blazing beauty and aura of Lord Krishna spellbound. Shri Krishna then stood up and addressed Dhritarashtra saying that if he did justice to virtuous and noble

Pandavas, he would enjoy the lordship of the entire earth and would enjoy peace. If there is war, then whether his brother's sons or his own sons died, he would obviously feel pained and anguished. Therefore, if Dhritarashtra were able to restrain his own sons, then sons of Kunti would serve him, live for him and fight for him. Dhritarashtra, in response, expressed his helplessness as his wicked son Duryodhana had never listened to him and has never followed the path ordained by scriptures. Therefore, Lord Krishna should render advice to Duryodhana to bring about any lasting peace.

Shri Krishna turned to Duryodhana and reminded him that he was a descendant of the noble line of Bharatas and he should pursue the path of dharma so that this noble line of kings does not get destroyed. Madhav also added that if Duryodhana listened to reason and justice, Pandavas themselves would install Dhritarashtra as the emperor and declare Duryodhana as the heir apparent. He should make peace with Pandavas by giving back to them their share of the kingdom. Bhishma, Drona, and Vidur started persuading Duryodhana to accept the advice rendered by Janardan, the scion of Dasharhas. Duryodhana was furious with everyone. He got up and admonished Lord Krishna saying that he was not the one to be blamed as he had never done anything wrong. He added that When he was young, a grievous wrong was done to him by giving Pandavas half the kingdom over which they had no legal or rightful claim. Duryodhana accepted this injustice then. After that, Pandavas staked their empire in the game of dice and lost; thus, they forfeited their kingdom. After losing their domain during the game of dice, they went to the forests. On what basis they were now asking for getting their kingdom back and why they were issuing threats of resorting to war? Duryodhana then declared that he had not done anything wrong; he could not be made to bow down under such intimidations and that he would not give even an inch of land to Pandavas, not even a needle-point of it.

Shri Krishna at that time reminded Duryodhana about the wrongs committed by him: the game of dice was fraudulently arranged in conspiracy with Shakuni; Draupadi was dragged and insulted in the open Assembly in front of Kuru elders; an attempt was made to kill all the Pandavas in the wax palace at Varanavat. Finally, Duryodhana did not even honour the terms of wager as per which the empire of Indraprastha was to be given back to Pandavas after completion of 12 years of exile and 13th year of living incognito. Instead of feeling repentant, Duryodhana had the impudence to say that he had never done anything wrong. Seeing that Bhishma and Drona seemed to be agreeing with Shri Krishna, Dushasana advised Duryodhana to walk out of the assembly. Duryodhana, accompanied by his brothers, Karna, Shakuni, and other accomplices, walked out of the Assembly. Shri Krishna at that time advised that sometimes to protect the

entire race an individual may have to be sacrificed. In order to save the entire Kuru race, Kuru king may have to sacrifice his son Duryodhana.

Dhritarashtra at that time asked Vidur to bring Gandhari, hoping that their son might listen to his mother. Gandhari came, and Duryodhana was called back. Gandhari at that time spoke in a very conciliatory and appreciative tone and advised Duryodhana to follow the advice of his father, his grandsire, Drona, Kripa and Vidur. Someone who is unrighteous, haughty, and unjust, cannot maintain a kingdom for a long time. The kings in order to win name and fame must exercise control over their senses. Gandhari also added that Krishna and Arjun combined were invincible. She then expressed the desire that her son should heed Krishna's advice and give the sons of Pandu half the kingdom, which was their due share. Duryodhana, however, appeared adamant. An anguished Gandhari at that time admonished her son saying that he desired to enjoy the wealth earned by the sons of Kunti but did not possess the necessary competence to do so. Treating with contempt the advice tendered by his own mother, Duryodhana again walked out of the assembly.

Duryodhana and his cronies thereafter started discussing the ways and means for either capturing or killing Krishna Vasudeva. Satyaki overheard their conversation and quickly asked the Vrishni forces to get ready for action. In the meantime, Satyaki went inside the Assembly and communicated the news to Shri Krishna, Dhritarashtra, Vidur, and all the other elders. Satyaki warned Dhritarashtra that the time for the destruction of all his sons had arrived. He informed that they were preparing to do an act which could just not be accomplished. By no means could they capture unconquerable Krishna. Shri Krishna at that time added that since sons of Dhritarashtra wanted to act so wickedly, Yudhishthir had even higher chances of success. Shri Krishna could right away capture these wily Kuru princes and hand them over to Yudhishthir, but he would not do so as that was against the model code of conduct prescribed for ambassadors.

Vidur warned Duryodhana that in his attempt to defeat Lord Krishna, he along with his friends and ministers would get reduced to ashes. Shri Krishna at that time, laughed aloud, saying that Duryodhana was mistaken to think that he was alone. As he was laughing, suddenly his body flashed like lightning, and then he showed his Vishvarupa (universal form), which had merged in itself the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. In his right eye stood Arjun and in left stood Balaram, behind them were Yudhishthir, Bhima, Nakul, and Sahadev. Further behind were Andhakas, Vrishnis, Panchals, and many others. Looking at that beautiful appearance of Madhav, some were frightened, some others were amazed, and many others were totally bewildered. Shri Krishna then took leave of king

Dhritarashtra. He, followed by Satyaki and Vidur, went and reported all that had happened to his father's sister Pritha *alias* Kunti.

Shri Krishna informed that no peaceful settlement could be arrived at because Duryodhana was not willing to give Pandavas their due. Kunti then asked Keshava to convey a very stern message to Yudhishthir, saying that it was the time that he performed his duties as a Kshatriya. He should have a kingdom which is won by his own prowess. He should protect, nurture, and support his subjects, instead of living in others' territories as their dependant. Since Yudhishthir was born in the family of a Kshatriya king, it was his duty to perform sacrificial rites, practice liberality, heroism, greatness, and valour whether these were virtues in his eyes or not. It was sinful for a Kshatriya to live the life of a beggar.

Finally, Kunti requested Shri Krishna to tell Yudhishthir in clear cut words that he should fight like a Kshatriya king and should not sink the name of his ancestors in infamy. Kunti then conveyed a message for Arjun saying that at the time of his birth, a celestial voice had announced that he along with Bhima would be the subjugator of the world. Now was the time to prove that prediction correct, with the help from Krishna himself. She also told Madhav to remind virtuous and valiant Nakul and Sahadev about their duties as Kshatriyas. Kunti then asked Lord Krishna to remind her sons about the harsh and inhuman treatment meted out to Draupadi in their presence and as a consequence of their actions. This was a crime which could not be forgiven; therefore, her sons should follow the path indicated by Draupadi. Lastly, Kunti pleaded that Lord Krishna should protect her sons.

CHAPTER 26

Dialogue between Shri Krishna and Karna & between Kunti and Karna

Shri Krishna was preparing to leave Hastinapur in order to reach Upaplavya. Kuru elders had come to see him off, and Shri Krishna asked Karna to ascend his chariot. Shri Krishna then revealed to Karna the story of his birth, saying that he was neither the son of Radha nor belonged to the Sutas. He was actually the first-born son of Kunti, born out of her union with the Sun god. He after that informed Karna that the moment Yudhishthir comes to know about this fact, he would abandon his right to be the emperor in favour of Karna and all five Pandavas would obey his orders. All the five sons of Draupadi along with Abhimanyu would worship Karna as their king. Even Shri Krishna and Vrishnis would extend full respect and courtesy to him. Therefore Shri Krishna pleaded that Karna should let the brotherly feelings develop with his real brothers.

Karna expressed gratitude to Krishna for saying those words out of goodwill and concern for Karna. He, however, expressed his helplessness in shifting his loyalty from the sons of Dhritarashtra to the sons of Kunti. Karna then explained that Adhirath and Radha brought him up with great affection and he got married to the daughters of Sutas. Under the protection of Duryodhana, he enjoyed prosperity as well as sovereignty. From the fear of getting slain, if he did not fight against Arjun, he would suffer from infamy. Karna then added that even if Dharamputra Yudhishthir offered him the throne, he would offer the same to Duryodhana. All through Duryodhana had given him great respect, and all his

preparations for war take his support and prowess for granted. Therefore it would be immoral for him to shift loyalties at that stage.

Karna then conceded before Lord Krishna that he did believe that Yudhishthir would be victorious in the forthcoming war. He conveyed his best wishes to Bhima, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev. He expressed the apprehension that he would be slain by Arjun, and Bhima would drink the blood of Dushasana, two princes from Panchal would kill Bhishma and Drona. Bhima would be the slayer of Duryodhana, and the entire Kuru race would get annihilated in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. He also conceded that the cause of this mass destruction would be Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana, Dushasana, Shakuni and Karna himself. Karna, however, refused to switch loyalty at that stage, nor did he agree to withdraw himself from the war.

Shri Krishna at that time told Karna that since the war was imminent and unavoidable, let the hostilities start after seven days on No Moon day (5/142/18). Krishna added that, after this war, world would indeed come to an end, and Karna said that he would probably meet Shri Krishna in heaven. The meeting after that ended and seated in his chariot, Shri Krishna went towards Upaplavya. He went and narrated all the details of his embassy in Hastinapur to Pandavas advising them to get ready for war.

After losing all hopes of any peaceful settlement, Kunti was sunk in grief. She started thinking that Karna was a great warrior on the side of Kurus, who was ever keen to kill her five brave sons. Her heart got filled with grief and anguish, and she decided to share the truth about Karna's birth with him. Tormented with these anxious thoughts, Kunti went in the morning on the banks of Ganga where Karna regularly used to come to bathe and offer his daily prayers. Karna was at that time in deep meditation, facing east. Kunti waited standing silently behind him.

After his prayers were over, Karna suddenly saw Kunti standing behind him. He bowed before her respectfully and then enquired about the reason for her presence there at that time. Kunti responded that she had come there to inform him that Karna was not Radha's son nor did he belong to the caste of Suta, the chariot drivers. He was actually Surya's son born out of the womb of Kunti. After that, Kunti narrated the entire story of Karna's birth to him, Karna's birth to him, which went like this:

Once when Kunti was a young unmarried maiden, Sage Durvasa came to stay with Kunti's father Kuntibhoj for a few days. Kuntibhoj asked his daughter Kunti, sister of Vasudeva adopted by Kuntibhoj, to look after Sage Durvasa. Kunti looked after the Sage with great devotion and pleased him with her warm hospitality and service with dedication. The learned Brahman Sage offered that she could ask for

any boons. She, however, responded, saying that satisfaction of the Brahman Sage was her reward. The Sage at that time gave her a Mantra, which she could invoke anytime to call any god. Kunti was thus initiated into those mantras by the Sage; expressing his pleasure and satisfaction to Kuntibhoj, the Sage Durvasa departed.

Kunti wanted to test the efficacy of those Mantras. She invoked Sun god, which was rising with grandeur and glow. Soon the Sun appeared before her and offered his services. Kunti asked him to go away, but the Sun expressed his desire to unite with her and bless her with a son. If she failed to comply, Sun God would curse Kuntibhoj as well as that Brahman Sage who had given her the Mantras without explaining their full implications. Kunti then explained that she was a maiden and wanted to preserve her chastity as well as her virtue. The Sun god, however, insisted that he would unite with her, she would get impregnated but would become a virgin again after that. Afraid of the curse on her father, Kunti surrendered. Surya united with her, and in due course of time, Kunti gave birth to an effulgent son, who was clad in armour and was adorned with beautiful golden ear-rings. Immediately after giving birth to the child, Kunti placed that child in a comfortable water-proof basket. With tears rolling down her eyes and prayers for the newborn on her lips, she consigned that basket into the Ashva River.

The basket containing the child went crossing Ashva and Yamuna Rivers and then moving along the waves of Ganga, it arrived at the city of Champa. One Adhirath of Suta tribe and his noble wife Radha saw the basket containing things preventive of dangers and dyed with saffron, and they seized it. They opened the basket and saw a handsome child with golden armour and ear-rings. Since they had no child, instantly Adhirath told Radha that the God Almighty had sent the child for them. After that, the child grew up as the son of Adhirath and Radha and was given the name Karna. Considering his interests similar to those of other Kshatriyas, Adhirath sent him to be trained under Drona with Kuru princes.

With the passage of time, Karna became a great friend of Duryodhana and grew extremely inimical to the other five sons of Kunti. He had obtained weapons from Drona, Kripa, and Parashuram. He became a celebrated warrior, and he always had an intense desire to challenge and defeat Arjun. During the display on the completion of training, Duryodhana had made Karna the king of Anga Desh and ever since he had been increasing his prowess and proficiency in weaponry. **Five Pandava brothers were totally unaware of the fact that Karna was their brother.**

Kunti then suggested that Karna should join his other his five brothers and they would welcome him wholeheartedly. Surrounded by five valiant brothers, Karna would look effulgent like Brahma amongst the gods.

When Kunti concluded her address, Karna had a feeling Sun God endorsed Kunti's request, but then he checked himself and thought that Sun God was only testing his loyalty and strength of mind. He responded sadly and firmly saying that his mother's advice was against the principles of dharma enunciated in scriptures. Immediately after his birth, Kunti had thrown him in the River and deprived him of all rights and privileges enjoyed by Kshatriyas. The love of the mother and that of the siblings was denied to him. Duryodhana was the only one who respected him and who restored his self-esteem. He considered himself as belonging to Suta caste, but Duryodhana bestowed on him the privileges of a Kshatriya king. Duryodhana and other Kuru princes look upon him as an ark, which would enable them to cross the deluge of war. Deserting them at this stage would amount to treachery and ingratitude. He would like to discharge the debt of Duryodhana even by losing his own life. Karna finally added that he did not wish to tell a lie to his mother and that he would surely fight against her sons in the war.

After some rethinking Karna continued saying that he could not send his mother totally disappointed. therefore, he added that in this war either he or Arjun would survive. He promised that he would not kill any of her other four sons. As a result, she would still have five sons living as out of Arjun and him only one would survive. Kunti neither had any guts nor any moral ground to say anything further; therefore, she departed maintaining complete silence, thinking that God's will had to be accepted by everyone.

Keshava reached Upaplavya from Hastinapur; all the Pandavas sat around him to listen to the details of what had transpired in the Kuru court. Shri Krishna informed that all hopes of any peaceful settlement had vanished because of Duryodhana's wrathful and unrighteous attitude. Krishna narrated the happenings, thus: Bhishma then advised Duryodhana that he had persecuted his cousins for a very long time and that the time for entering into a peaceful settlement had arrived. Arjun had already acquired the master of all weapons named Gandiva bow, and Bhima had received the celestial mace, brought by Mayasur. He reminded that during the battle at Viratanagar, Arjun had single-handedly succeeded in defeating the entire Kuru army. Drona at that time, intervened to tell Duryodhana that there was a long history of family co-operation and goodwill in the Kuru family. Pandu, the virtuous and valiant king, left his kingdom to be ruled over by his brother Dhritarashtra. He ruled over the kingdom keeping noble advice of Vidur in mind. Duryodhana was violating the family norms by being so selfish and adamant. Guru Drona further added that Arjun had been his disciple and was as dear to him as his own son Ashwatthama; therefore, it would be difficult for him to kill him in the battle. He advised that Duryodhana should enter into a just and peaceful settlement with the sons of Pandu.

Krishna went on: Worried about the safety of his sons Dhritarashtra repeatedly pleaded with Duryodhana to enter into a just and fair peaceful settlement with Pandavas. However, Duryodhana disobeyed him before the full Assembly. Thus foxed and frustrated, the Kuru king then got Gandhari called so that she could make the right sense prevail over her son. Gandhari came and tried to explain to Duryodhana that Pandu was the real king of great Kuru kingdom. After his death, the entire kingdom belonged to his sons and let Dharmaputra Yudhishthir rule over the whole kingdom. How could Duryodhana refuse to give them even their own share? Vidur also tried his best to convince Duryodhana for a peaceful settlement. However, he just refused to listen to any sensible advice from any of the prudent elders who were trying to do him good.

CHAPTER 27

War became imminent; forces of Kauravas & Pandavas stood face to face in Kurukshetra

Shri Krishna informed the sons of Kunti that Duryodhana had collected 11 Akshauhini forces in his support and he was repeatedly asking them to reach Kurukshetra and be prepared for the impending war. All his efforts to persuade him to abandon the idea of war met with failure. His efforts to dissuade Karna also from war met with failure. Therefore, war appeared to be the only option left now. Yudhishthir after that told his brothers that they had seven Akshauhini of the army which should be arranged in battle array. The entire army was divided into seven divisions. Drupada, Virat, Dhrishtadhyumna, Shikhandin, Satyaki, Chekitana, and Bhimsena were appointed to head each of the seven divisions.

Duryodhana consulted with Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni; subsequently, he called Uluka, son of gambler Shakuni, aside and asked him to go as a messenger to the Pandava Camp and convey some very nasty and hate provoking messages to Yudhishthir, his brothers and Shri Krishna. His object was to send nasty, degrading words to Pandavas so that they get demoralized and concede defeat before fighting the war. Uluka went and conveyed Duryodhana's nasty message to Yudhishthir. He thundered that when Yudhishthir was defeated in the game of dice, and he watched helplessly his wife Draupadi being dragged in the open Assembly by Dushasana, where was his manhood gone? Why did not he lift his weapons at that

time? He should remember that now when he was preparing for the war, invincible Bhishma and Drona were on Duryodhana's side. Yudhishthir should not behave like a frog in the well by not appreciating that there were unconquerable kingdoms from north, south, east and west of Indian sub-continent on Duryodhana's side ready to annihilate Pandava forces. After that, Uluka provoked each of the Pandava heroes with under mentioned words from Duryodhana –

1. Where had Bhima's strength gone when he was taken as a slave and then boasted of drinking Dushasana's blood? Why he did not show his prowess when he was working as a cook in the palace of the king of Virat? Let him dare to drink Dushasana's blood now!
2. Where was Arjun's Gandiva when he was weeping in the forests for 12 years and working as a eunuch in the palace of the king of Virat. Where was his prowess when Draupadi was dragged by the hair in the Assembly? Now the time has arrived when Arjun would have to fight against unassailable Bhishma and Drona and get vanquished in no time.
3. Uluka conveyed Duryodhana's warning to Shri Krishna saying that the son of slaves of Kamsa thinks too much of himself. Let him show his skill like a brave man as the charioteer of Arjun or concede defeat gracefully.
4. Duryodhana's warning to Nakul and Sahadev was that since the war had now been proclaimed, they should fight with all the energy remembering the sufferings of last 13-14 years.
5. Duryodhana's warning to Dhrishtadhyumna was that he should count his days as the time for his death in the battlefield at the hands of greatest Bowman Drona had arrived. Nobody could go back alive after fighting with Drona, son of Sage Bhardwaj.
6. To Shikhandin, a message was conveyed that since he was born as a woman, Bhishma would not kill him and he could fight with the other warriors to get killed.

On hearing these words, Yudhishthir's eyes were red with anger. He then asked Uluka to convey his words to wicked, sinful, and mean Duryodhana that he should fight with his own strength and that he was coming to fight against the Pandavas accompanied by Bhishma and Drona who were deeply respected by them. Yudhishthir further said that arrogance, vanity and wickedness of Duryodhana would soon see him defeated. Yudhishthir then added that difference between him and Duryodhana was the same as the difference between truth and falsehood. He would have never wanted to kill his own cousins during the war;

that is why the offer was made for even accepting five villages, but wily Duryodhana took it as a weakness.

After that, Arjun added that he, assisted by Lord Krishna, would soon succeed in killing Bhishma and Drona; Duryodhana would then run around despairing for his own life. Shikhandin told Uluka that he would surely slay Duryodhana's grandsire Bhishma. He added that the whole world knew that Amba had been sent to earth as Shikhandin by the Creator for slaying Bhishma to avenge the atrocities he perpetrated on that innocent soul in the previous birth. Dhrishtadhyumna then conveyed the message to Duryodhana through Uluka that he would certainly kill Drona along with his associates and friends and that he was born to achieve that objective. Bhima added that he would surely drink the blood of Dushasana to avenge the dishonour of his wife in open Assembly and he would surely kill Duryodhana by hitting on his thighs, which were shown to humiliate Draupadi after the game of dice. Four brothers of Yudhishthir then added that they did not earlier wield weapons against Kuru princes out of respect for their kind-hearted and noble elder brother Yudhishthir. However, now they were not going to show any mercy towards them.

After that, Shri Krishna added that all that had been said by the noble and mighty heroes would truly happen. Bhishma and Drona would undoubtedly get killed. Sinful Duryodhana should come prepared to the battlefield as wherever he would go; he shall find Arjun, with Krishna as his charioteer, following him. Krishna told Uluka that Duryodhana should consider that blood of Dushasana had already been drunk by Bhima, and he had broken Duryodhana's thighs. In the end, Yudhishthir added that he never desired the massacre of his own kinsmen, but this was going to happen due to never-ending jealousy, malice and wickedness on the part of Duryodhana; he should now think that his end has come. Uluka took leave, went to Duryodhana, and conveyed to him all that had been said by Yudhishthir, Arjun, Shri Krishna, Bhima, Dhrishtadhyumna, and Shikhandin. **Yudhishthir at the time was around 70 years' old,** Bhima and Duryodhana were in their 68th year, Arjun and Shri Krishna were around 66 years old, whereas twins had entered 64th year.

Yudhishthir then consulted his brothers about appointing one of the Commanders as the Supreme Commander of Pandava forces. Sahadev suggested the name of king Virat, Nakul recommended Drupad for appointment as Commander-in-chief. Arjun suggested that Dhrishtadhyumna, who was capable of leading the Pandava forces against Bhishma and Drona, should be appointed as the commander-in-chief. Yudhishthir finally sought the opinion of Shri Krishna who responded by saying that each of the seven commanders was worthy and brave

enough to fill the Kuru forces with fear. Yet, he would agree with Arjun's recommendation and endorse that Dhrishtadhyumna should be appointed as the Supreme Commander.

Accordingly, Drupad's valiant son Dhrishtadhyumna, who had been waiting for an opportunity for 14 years to take revenge for the insult and humiliation piled on his sister Draupadi in the Kuru court, was anointed the Supreme Commander of the Pandava army. The blowing of conches, the beating of drums, and the lion-roar of warriors rent the air at that time. Seven Akshauhini forces marched valiantly towards Kurukshetra, where, in an exceptionally vast ground, Yudhishthir had ordered his army to be encamped. Thousands of tents were fixed and provided with an abundance of foods, eatables, drinks and fuels etc. Thousands of skilful workers and physicians were also engaged. Provision was made for an inexhaustible supply of bowstrings, bows, quivers, arrows, maces and other weapons.

On being appointed the Commander-in-chief, Dhrishtadhyumna assigned a particular task to each warrior. Arjun was asked to fight with Karna, Bhima was expected to kill Duryodhana, Dhrishtaketu was scheduled to fight with Shalya, Nakul with Ashvatthama. It was anticipated that the Vrishni warrior Yuyudhan would battle against the king of Sindhu-Sauvira, Shikhandin would fight against Bhishma, and Sahadev would kill wily Shakuni. The five sons of Draupadi were expected to defeat Trigartas. Abhimanyu was considered to be a warrior possessing unparalleled prowess and was expected to vanquish Vrishasena and other rulers of the earth. Arjun promised to kill Bhishma, whereas Dhrishtadhyumna himself wanted to defeat and kill Drona.

CHAPTER 28

Description of the prowess of kings and warriors who fought on behalf of Kauravas and Pandavas during Mahabharat war

When armies were making preparations for starting the most devastating battle ever fought in the history of mankind, Dhritarashtra asked Sanjay to describe to him the various mountains, rivers, kingdoms, and provinces of Bharatvarsha. He wanted to know in detail about Bharatavarsha, which was also known as Jambudvipa, the sovereignty over which his son Duryodhana desired. Sanjay thereafter, described in detail that Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Shuktimat, Gandhamadan, Vindhya, and Paripatra were the seven main mountains of Bharatavarsha. This favourite land of Indra had hundreds of rivers, including Ganga, Sindhu, Sarasvati, Chandrabhaga, Yamuna, Drishadvati, Sutlej, Beas, Godavari, Narmada, Krishna, Kaveri, Mahanadi, Tungavena *etc.* The complete list containing names of more than 125 rivers, which used to flow during Mahabharat era, *i.e.* towards the end of mid-Holocene climatic optima with good monsoonal rains, is given in verses 13-36 of chapter 9 of Bhishma Parva. Shri Laxman Budrak has uploaded the simplified, comprehensive list on the link - (https://www.jatland.com/home/Bhisma_Parva,_Mahabharat/Book_VI, on Jatland Wikipedia)

During the Mahabharat era, Bharatvarsha consisted of more than 300 provinces and kingdoms. Most of these were participating in the war, either on behalf of

Kauravas or Pandavas. Sanjay further explained to Dhritarashtra that the land of Bharatavarsha was rich enough to provide for everyone; however, the war was being fought only because a wicked king Duryodhana wanted to rule over the entire earth himself.

After that, Sanjay described that there were four yugas in Bharatavarsha, namely Krita, Treta, Dvapar, and Kali. Krita (Sat Yuga) had a length of four thousand years, Treta of three thousand years, Dvapra of two thousand years and Kaliyuga may not have any fixed period of life. (Interpretation of the concept of Yuga cycles is given in Appendix - 4)

Duryodhana at that time had a good look at the Kaurava and Pandava armies gathered in that vast ground of Kurukshetra looking like another ocean. He wanted to hear about the comparative might of warriors on both sides from Bhishma who was appointed Supreme Commander of Kuru forces. Bhishma then described the Rathas (mighty car-warriors) and Atirathas (car-warriors possessing unparalleled dexterity) in armies of both the sides (Udyog Parva/164-173). On the side of Kurus, the following were said to be the supreme warriors, including Rathas and Maharathas -

1. Bhishma himself possessed unbeatable prowess – Hastinapur (in Meerut District of UP)
2. Kuru king Duryodhana and his brother Dushasana – both were Atirathis. They would fight with all their might against Pandavas because of their extreme jealousy and hatred for them – Hastinapur (in Meerut Distt of UP).
3. Sons of Duryodhana and Dushasana were Rathas
4. Ashwatthama, son of Drona, was a Ratha – however, life was very dear to him and would wish to preserve it.
5. Drona himself was the mightiest warrior, an Atiratha – he would cause huge loss of life to Pandava forces, and his celestial weapons would cause incalculable damage to them. However, he was too fond of Arjun and admired his qualities.
6. Kripa, the preceptor, was a Ratha, fighting on behalf of Hastinapur. This son of Shardwan of Gautamavansh would make use of a vast variety of weapons.
7. Satyavan, the leader of Duryodhana's armies, was an Atiratha and would cause a considerable loss to the enemy forces.
8. King Sudakshina of Kamboja would fight with all his might to see that Pandavas got defeated in this war.

9. King Nila of Mahishmati, who had developed enmity with Sahadev when he went to defeat the kings before Yudhishthir conducted Rajsuya yajna, was an Atiratha.

10. Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti possessed unparalleled prowess and wanted to defeat the Pandavas.

11. Five princes of Trigarta wanted to avenge the defeat at the hands of four Pandava brothers when they went to attack Viratanagar. They were all Rathas.

12. Shakuni, prince of Gandhara, was very fond of Duryodhana and was the mastermind behind most of the conspiracies, *e.g.* tricking Yudhishthir into the Game of Dice, was a Rathi.

13. Karna, king of Angadesh, was a Rathi; he was the sworn enemy of Pandavas and was ever ready to wage war against them.

14. Vrihasena, son of Karna, was a Ratha who would fight with all his might against the Pandavas.

15. King Bhagdatta, ruler of Pragjyotishapur; he wanted to avenge his defeat at the hands of Arjun before Rajsuya Yajna. The Archaeologists have concluded that Pragajyotishapura is buried under modern-day Gauhati in northeastern India.

16. King Jayadratha of Sindhu-Sauvira was a Rathi; he wanted to avenge the humiliation piled upon him by Pandavas when he had attempted to abduct Draupadi.

17. King Shalya of Madradesh was an Atiratha. Bhishma opined that leaving out two sons of his sister Madri, named Nakul and Sahadev; he would fight fiercely against all other Pandavas.

18. Brihadbala, the ruler of Koshal kingdom (in Uttar Pradhesh from Ayodhya to Shravasti), was also a Ratha and would fight against Pandavas with full force.

19. Five rulers of Kaikeya, located between Vitasta (Jhelum) and Airavati (Ravi), were fearless warriors.

20. Srutayush (Srutayudha), King of Kalinga (in Orissa and Andhra region), whose daughter Bhanumati was married to Duryodhana would fight bravely.

21. Powerful Yadava chief Kritavarman, who belonged to Andhaka tribe of Yadavas would fight on behalf of Kauravas, with the assistance of one Akshauhini Naraini Sena.

22. Balhika was the elder brother of Shantanu, who devoted his life to conquer Balkh. Balhika along with his son Somdatta and grandson Bhurishrava took part in the Kurukshetra War from the Kaurava side.

Bhishma after that described the mighty warriors, Rathas and Atirathas who had gathered to fight on behalf of Pandavas –

1. Yudhishthir, king of Indraprastha (located around Purana Quila area of New Delhi) was a great warrior.
2. Bhimsena was equal to eight Rathas.
3. Arjun himself was the mightiest warrior, an Atiratha. Duryodhana should never engage in a direct fight with him as he would conquer all opponents. He would fight ferociously because of the unjust humiliations piled on him, his brothers, and his wife Draupadi by Kurus in the past.
4. Nakul and Sahadev, two sons of Madri, were handsome and also possessed such skill that they were capable of killing lions.
5. Five sons of Draupadi were also mighty warriors. Uttam, son of King Virat, was also a Ratha of great prowess.
6. Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra and Arjun, was mightiest of warriors. He was capable of using various types of weapons with great agility.
7. Satyaki, warrior of Vrishni race had come from Dwarka & Prabhas and would fight very fiercely against the Kauravas.
8. King Virat of Matsya Desh also wanted to take revenge from Kauravas for attacking his kingdom, when Pandavas were living incognito in Viratanagar.
9. King Drupad of Panchal wanted to avenge the humiliation piled on his daughter Draupadi in Kuru Assembly; he would fight ferociously, willing to lay down his life.
10. Panchalas, Srinjayas, and Somakas were powerful warrior tribes allied to the Panchalas by kinship. Prabhadrakas were an elite group of Panchala army.
11. Shikhandin, son of the king of Panchal, would fight to prove his might to avenge dishonour of his sister Draupadi in Kuru Court. He would try to avenge the injustice done to Amba (in his previous birth) by Bhishma.
12. Dhrishtadhyumna, prince of Panchal, was a mighty Atiratha. He was the Supreme commander of Pandava forces, and future generations would remember exceptionally brilliant battle formations done by him.
13. Dhrishtaketu, king of Chedis, was a Maharatha (Chedi was located in Gwalior region between Ganga and Narmada in MP)
14. King Kunti Bhoja of Kunti Pura was an Atiratha and would fight with full force to avenge the atrocities piled upon his daughter Kunti's children by Kauravas.

15. Warriors Chekitana and Satyadhriti were two Maharathas in the Pandava army.

16. King of Kashi (modern-day Varanasi in UP); his expertise was described as equal to eight times a Ratha.

17. Purujit, son of Kuntibhoj and brother of Kunti was an Atiratha. Bhishma said that he would be showing his ability like that of Indra.

18. Ghatotkach, son of Bhima and Hidimba, was an Atiratha. He possessed power of illusion and made skilful use of celestial weapons.

19. Vasudev Krishna, that ruler of the earth, was unbeatable. He, with his discus and Arjun, with his Gandiva, together were unbeatable like coming together of Sun and Moon.

20. Pandya king Sarangadhwaja sided with the Pandavas in the great Kurukshetra.

In addition to these powerful Rathas and Atirathas, several other warriors had come over from entire Bharatvarsha to participate in the war. The prevailing belief at that time was that Kshatriyas who died fighting a war, especially in Kurukshetra, would reach the highest heavens if they were killed and would enjoy the earth if they were victorious. That is why, tribal chiefs and kings, warriors and soldiers from all over Bharatvarsha wanted to be a part of this war.

Narrating the details about Rathas and Atirathas, Bhishma added that he himself would concentrate on fighting against Arjun and Shri Krishna as they were together considered to be invincible. After that, Bhishma said that although Duryodhana placed considerable reliance on Karna and his ability, he did not think much of him as he was arrogant. Bhishma also added that the curse of Parashuram on Karna that his command over supernatural weapons would fail him in time of need could prove disastrous. Bhishma added that Karna would get killed at the hands of Arjun during the war.

Enraged with these harsh words, Karna rebuked Bhishma by pointing out that he had never missed an opportunity to humiliate him. He had been bearing all his taunts and degradations for the sake of Duryodhana. Karna retorted by saying that Bhishma was expressing the opinion that he would not be of any significant help during the war; whereas the truth was just the opposite. Bhishma would not be of great help in winning the war as firstly he had a soft corner for Pandavas and secondly he had become senile. Karna further added that he would not take up arms so long as Bhishma was the Supreme Commander of Kuru forces. He would participate in the battle only after Bhishma was vanquished. Bhishma warned Karna that he deserved to get killed for such impudence. Duryodhana was

distressed, and he intervened, saying that he needed the help of both Bhishma and Karna and that instead of fighting between them, they should fight against the enemy.

After that, Bhishma announced that following his religious vows; he would never kill a woman or one who has been a woman; for that reason, Bhishma would not slay Shikhandin who was born as a woman. Duryodhana at that time wanted to know some more details related to the story of Shikhandin. In response, Bhishma narrated the past events. The famous story went thus: After he had taken a vow of celibacy to enable his father Shantanu to marry Satyavati, the marriage actually took place. Satyavati gave birth to Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Chitrangada died without having any child and Vichitravirya became the successor to the throne. When Vichitravirya attained adolescence, Bhishma learnt that king of Kashi had arranged a swayamvar for his three daughters – Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika, to which Kuru prince was not invited. Bhishma went and abducted all the three daughters, making use of force. King Salva challenged Bhishma because he was interested in getting married to Amba. He, however, was defeated at the hands of Bhishma. Bhishma reached Hastinapur and made preparations for the marriage of the three princesses with Vichitravirya.

Amba at that time mocked at Bhishma saying that she had mentally accepted King Salva, as her husband. Therefore her marriage with Vichitravirya was against what had been ordained in the scriptures. Bhishma accepted her objection and sent her to King Salva with proper escorts. Ambika and Ambalika were duly married to Vichitravirya. However, king Salva refused to marry Amba saying that since he had been defeated and disgraced by Bhishma when he carried her away, therefore, he would not marry her now. Amba came back to Hastinapur, but Vichitravirya also refused to marry her.

Amba thereafter turned to Bhishma, but he also refused to marry her saying that he couldn't break his vow of celibacy. Beautiful princess Amba lived for six bitter years of sorrow in Hastinapur but could not settle down in life. She became furious and developed fierce hatred against Bhishma, who was perceived as the reason for her misfortune. She sought in vain the support of Kshatriya princes, but they were all afraid of fighting against Bhishma. She finally went to the forests for practising austerities and sought the support of Parashuram. Parashuram was moved by her anguish as also by his hatred for the Kshatriyas. As a result, he waged war against Bhishma, which lasted for many days; however, in the end, Bhishma won. Amba was consumed by grief, but she remained alive in the hope to take revenge from Bhishma. She went to the Himalayas and practised very rigorous austerities, which led to her getting a boon from Shiva that in her next birth she

would succeed in taking revenge and in slaying Bhishma. Amba was impatient to take revenge; therefore, she made a pyre and plunged herself into the fire, to get an early rebirth.

In her next birth, Amba was born as the daughter of King Drupada but was brought up as a son. The reason being that Mahadeva had predicted that she would be born as a woman but later on turn into a man. King Drupada even chose a bride for Shikhandin, who was the daughter of the king of Dasharana. After some time, the princess of Dasharana revealed that Shikhandin was actually a female. Anguished and angry, king of Dasharana proceeded with his forces to take revenge from king Drupada. King Drupada was embarrassed and distressed, whereas Shikhandin felt ashamed and frustrated. Shikhandin thereafter indulged in austerities and told his tale of sorrow to a Yaksha named SthunaKarna. The kind-hearted Yaksha agreed to have an exchange of sex with Shikhandin. Manhood was thus bestowed on Shikhandin, and he came back to Drupada. His marriage was saved, and the king of Dasharana had to withdraw his forces. Bhishma explained that considering all these facts; he would never attempt to slay Shikhandin even if he had to lose his own life.

CHAPTER 29

Astronomical dates of planetary positions observed before the commencement of the war

Preparations for war were in full swing, and Duryodhana set up his camps in such a manner that they all combined to look like second Hastinapur. The food, the weapons, clothes, and tents were provided in abundance. Yudhishthir's armies were encamped on the western side of the battlefield, thus facing the East, whereas Duryodhana's forces were placed in the East facing the West. On hearing about the forces getting ready to commence the most fearsome and disastrous battle, Sage Vyas came to meet Dhritarashtra and warned him of the most devastating results. He said that *dhoomketus*, *ulkapats*, eclipses forebode widespread destruction. He referred to lunar and solar eclipses and other planetary positions, which had been observed in that month of Kartik and which portended disastrous consequences. Therefore, he beseeched Dhritarashtra to prevent war at any cost. The exact dates of all these astronomical positions can be calculated by making use of modern planetarium softwares. (See Box 3.)

Sage Vyas referred to the very inauspicious lunar eclipse on Kartika Purnima followed by a solar eclipse on 13th day in the same month (Bhishma Parva/6/2/23, 6/3/32). This lunar eclipse was seen from Hastinapur (29^{o} N, 77^{o} E) on 26th September, 3139 BCE (11:10 hrs), on the first Purnima of Kartika month, whereas

Box 3: How do we compute the dates of events from given astronomical and other references in Mahabharat and other ancient texts?

Sage Vyas was not only a great hermit possessing extraordinary wisdom but also a great astronomer. He has described sequential astronomical positions observed in the sky at the time of important events related in Mahabharat; while describing the location and movement of planets vis-a-vis constellations and the other visible stars (Nakshatras). It may be noted that if locations of almost all planets vis-à-vis the constellations are described, then the similar position of planets vis-a-vis Nakshatras and constellations cannot be repeated in 25920 years. It is an accepted astronomical fact; the reason being that earth takes that much time to complete its precession cycle, and all planets move at different speeds around the Sun (For details refer Appendix 1).

With the basic knowledge of astronomy, by entering the precise details of planetary configurations narrated in Mahabharat (or in any other text), using planetarium softwares, sky views from given locations can be generated. In this manner, corresponding exact dates of these events can be ascertained. Several planetarium/sky simulation softwares for use on small computers have become available during the last three decades. These can display with sufficient accuracy the position of stars and planets, observable in the sky from the given location at any point of time, in the past or future for a few thousand years. When I started writing this book in 2016, I made use of 'Planetarium Gold' version 4.1 software of the Fogware Publishing primarily because it could generate printable, high-resolution coloured slides of the sky along with the date, time and place of observation.

Planetarium Gold software displays very clearly the phases of the moon; therefore, making it easy to ascertain the lunar date, eclipse date, full-moon day or no-moon day, etc. These are frequently referred to in Ramayan or Mahabharat and other ancient Indian texts. It also gives the option to display the traditional or scientific names of Nakshatras, i.e. Lunar Mansions. It displays the sky views after taking into consideration the complicated cycles like the precession of equinoxes and shift in the position of Pole star due to precession. However, this software was discontinued in 2008-09 and therefore is currently not available.

As a result, the sky views of Mahabharat references using Stellarium softwares (version 0.15.2/2017 & version 0.19.0/2019) which use NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris) were also generated. Except for the calendrical difference of about 26 days (+/- 1 day) with Planetarium software in depicting the same Skyview, the sky simulations generated using Stellarium software also matched the astronomical details narrated in Mahabharat. The difference of 26 days approximately is due to non-adjustment of 1 day for 131 years for pre-Gregorian reform period (3294/131=26) by Planetarium software; whereas, Stellarium takes into account this difference for the entire period. It is clarified here that adjustment of 1 day after every 131 years was required because the exact length of a year is not 365 days and 6 hours, but it is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. The difference of 11 minutes and 14 seconds totals up as one day in 131 years.

Stellarium is an open-source sky simulation software, which is available for free download. It is available for Linux, Macintosh, and Windows. Therefore the readers are encouraged to verify the details presented in this book on their IPads, IPhones, Laptops or Desktops.That is the reason for including in this book sequential sky simllations using Stellarium, with some Planetarium Sky views only to prove that all planetarium sofwares give the same results.

The sequential astronomical dates of Mahabharat arrived at in this manner, are fully supported by the radiocarbon dates of excavated samples, artefacts and plant-remains. These also get corroborated through oceanographic, geological, ecological, remote-sensing and genetic research reports.

Solar Eclipse was seen on 11th October, 3139 BCE, on Kartik Amavasya. Let us have a look at the relevant verses –

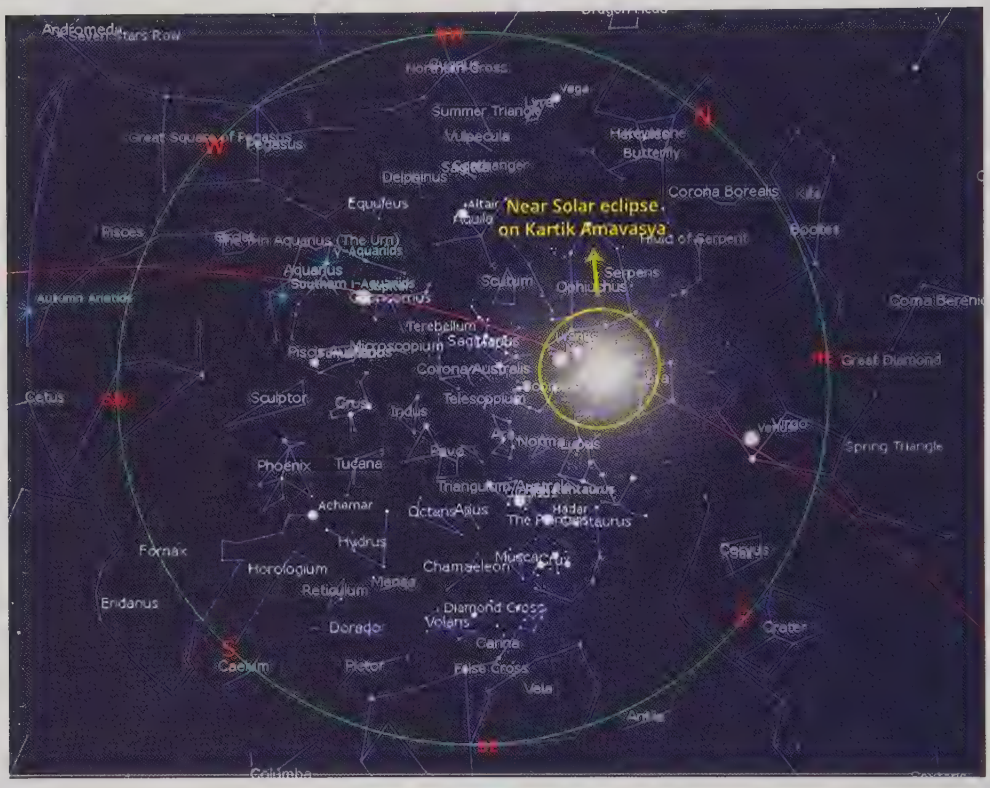
अलक्ष्यः प्रभयाहीनः पौर्णमासीं च कार्तिकीम् ।
चन्द्रोऽभूदग्निवर्णश्च पद्मवर्णनभस्तले ।। भीष्म पर्व, 32/2/6 ।।
चतुर्दशीं पञ्चदशीं भूतपूर्वां च षोडशीम् ।
इमां तु नाभिजानेऽहममावास्यां त्रयोदशीम् ।
चन्द्रसूर्यावुभौ ग्रस्तावेकमासीं त्रयोदशीम् ।। भीष्म पर्व, 6/3/32।।

Meaning - In the night of the Full Moon in *Kartik* month, the Moon lost its splendour and became invisible/looked like fire. This is an obvious reference to a lunar eclipse. Thereafter, Sage Vyas said that a lunar fortnight had hitherto consisted of 14 days or 15 days or even of 16 days, but on the 13th day and in the course of the same month two eclipses, both lunar and solar, have taken place.

Lunar eclipse as seen from Hastinapur (29°N,77°E) on 26th September, 3139 BCE, 13:56 hrs on the first Purnima of Kartika month

Expanded view of eclipsed Moon, Hastinapur; 26th Sept. 3139 BCE, at 13:56 hrs

Sage Vyas thereafter narrated that on the very next Amavasya of *Kartik* Month, there was a solar eclipse. When verification was made using Stellarium software from the latitude and longitude of Hastinapur, it was concluded that on 11th October, 3139 BCE. On Kartika Amavasya day the software also displays a near solar eclipse from Hastinapur. See the sky-view depicting solar eclipse of 11th October, 3139 BCE (22:15 hrs.) from Hastinapur –



Near Solar eclipse of 11th October, 3139 BCE (23:32 hrs.), Hastinapur (29°N, 77°E), 01:50 hours (generated using Stellarium 0.15.2 with NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris)

The magnified view of the No-Moon day on 11th Oct. 3139 BCE at 18:35. Stellarium otherwise does not clearly render the phases of the Moon in the normal view.

The absence of a clearly visible solar eclipse from Hastinapur on 11th October 3139 BCE has very convincing scientific reasons which have been described in Box 4.

Box 4 - Note on uncertainties in the display of eclipse timings of remote past –

Readers may ask a very pertinent question: why the lunar eclipse is being shown during day time whereas solar eclipses are being depicted during night time when Sun is not even above the horizon.

NASA has provided a very credible and convincing answer to this question (https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEhelp/uncertainty2004.html). NASA Eclipse Skyguide has given a chart of uncertainties in DeltaT, i.e. ΔT, clearly stating that there are bound to be inaccuracies in depicting the timings and longitudes of eclipse paths which occurred prior to 1600 CE. Based on the chart prepared by Morrison and Stephenson, a series of parabolic expressions have been derived, estimating uncertainties of time or in the longitudes of eclipse paths which occurred during the interval 2000 BCE to 1000 CE (i.e. 4000 BP to 1000 BP).

Table 3 - Uncertainty of ΔT (estimated)

Year	σ (seconds)	Longitude
-4000	16291	67.9°
-3500	12378	51.6°
-3000	8978	37.4°
-2500	6094	25.4°
-2000	3732	15.6°
-1500	1900	7.9°
-1000	622	2.6°

Thus, an eclipse which occurred 4000 years back, the software could depict the same up to time difference of 16291 seconds i.e. 11: 31 hrs. Thus, solar eclipses of Mahabharat times listed above, which software is depicting during night time, must have actually been observed during the day time and lunar eclipse depicted above might have been observed during night time. DeltaT is the difference between Terrestrial Time and Universal Time (Rotational time), which have been adopted as fixed as per certain norms. However, actually, the Universal time can vary on several occasions due to several factors like earthquakes, high tides, volcanic eruptions etc.

SAO/NASA Astrophysics Data System has also recorded the observations that Moon displays oscillations from two unknown sources: one within a period between 250-300 years with a co-efficient of 15" to 20" and the other within a period between 60 to 70 years with a co-efficient of some 3". These and many other factors, like the mean latitude of the Moon may not be zero, might lead to differences in observations of eclipses recorded thousands of years back and theoretical recordings based on fixed and pre-determined parameters. Therefore, it is very much possible that Solar Eclipse on 11th October, 3139 BCE, was actually observed at that time during the day, but the software displays the eclipse during the night time.

We also need to take note of the fact that neither Dr R N Iyengar nor Shri Narahari Achar has displayed the actual eclipses; they have only taken the years compatible for double/triple eclipses. They have also taken note of the uncertainties in time and location for the observation of thousands of years old eclipses.

It will not be out of place to mention that Planetarium Gold displays all these sky views on 26 Days' (+/- one day) earlier date i.e. on 14th September, 3139 BCE. This difference is due to non-adjustment of 1 day for 131 years for pre-Gregorian reform period (3425/131=26) by Planetarium software.

Sage Vyas also referred to the position of planets and nakshatras in verses 6/3/14 to 6/3/18, observed a few hours before the Solar Eclipse, which was considered to be inauspicious, foreboding large-scale destruction. All these positions could be accurately observed in the sky just a day before the solar eclipse on 11th October, 3139 BCE, *i.e.* on 10th October at 19:50 hours from Hastinapur (29°N, 77°E) as per Stellarium sky shot. The planetary positions, as narrated in Mahabharat and translated using traditional translations read with Sanskrit-Hindi and Sanskrit-English dictionaries are summarized as under –

मघास्वङ्गारको वक्रः श्रवणे च बृहस्पतिः ।
भगं नक्षत्रमाक्रम्य सूर्यपुत्रेण पीड्यते ।। भीष्म पर्व 6/3/14

6/3/14 Meaning: M*angal* (Angarko, i.e. Mars) is comfortable (i.e. *Magh*) entering its own house (i.e. *swa*),which is *Mesha* (Aries) in *Vakra*-gati (in forward-backwards motion) as it was in Taurus before 10th Oct. 3139 BCE. *Brihaspati (Jupiter)* is in *Shravan Nakshatra* (in Capricornus). Sun's offspring *Shani* (Saturn) is (in Scorpius) and is thus afflicting *Bhagham, i.e.* Uttar Phalguni (in Leo) which is 10th constellation from Scorpius and is therefore in full aspect of Saturn.

शुक्रः प्रोष्ठपदे पूर्वे समारुह्य विरोचते ।
उत्तरे तु परिक्रम्य सहित समुदीक्षते II भीष्म पर्व 6/3/15

6/3/15 - Meaning: Shining brilliantly, the planet *Shukra* (Venus) is aspecting *Poorva Bhadrapada* & thereafter *Uttara Bhadrapada* (both in Pisces). On 10th Oct, 3139 BCE, Venus is situated in *Kanya* (Virgo) and is thus aspecting 7th constellation from its location, *i.e. Meena Rashi* (Pisces).

श्वेतौ ग्रहः प्रज्जवलितः सधूम इव पावकः I
ऐन्द्रं तेजस्वि नक्षत्रं ज्येष्ठामाक्रम्य तिष्ठति II भीष्म पर्व 6/3/16

6/3/16 - Meaning: *Shweto Graha* could mean either Mercury or Ketu. In any case both Ketu (intersecting point) and Mercury blazing like fire were afflicting the effulgent constellation of Indra, *i.e.* Jyeshta in Scorpius on 10th October, 3139 BCE.

रोहिणीं पीडयत्येवमुभौ च शशिभास्करौ ।
चित्रास्वात्यन्तरे चैव विष्ठित पुरुषगृह।। भीष्म पर्व 6/3/17

6/3/17 - Meaning: Both Sun and Moon are located in Scorpius; therefore, they are afflicting *Rohini* (located just opposite in Taurus). *Parush Graha, i.e. Shukra* (Venus) is located between Chitra & *Swati* Asterisms and is thus located between *Kanya* (Virgo Constellation) and *Tula* (Libra constellation), *as is depicted in the sky shot of 10th October given below.*

वक्रानुवक्रं कृत्वा च श्रवणं पावकप्रभः ।
ब्रह्मराशिं समावृत्य लोहिताङ्गो व्यवस्थितः ।। भीष्म पर्व 6/3/18

6/3/18 – Meaning: *Brihaspati, i.e.* Jupiter (*Pavakprabha*) is going around *Shravana* in *Brahmraashi, i.e. Makar Rashi* (Capricornus). Brahmarashi means a mass of knowledge and intelligence; this was the name also given to Makar Rashi in ancient Indian texts. *Lohitang, i.e. Mangal* (Mars) in *Vakra-anuvakra Gati* (backwards-forward motion) is looking stable/static.

All these positions could be observed in the sky just a day before Amavasya of Solar Eclipse in the month of *Kartik* in 3139 BCE. As per Stellarium, all these positions were observed on 10th October, 3139 BCE, at 19.50, whereas Planetarium software displays the same Skyview on 14th September, 3139 BCE, at 18.30 (i.e. 26 dates earlier). The reason for this difference of 26 days is due to non-adjustment of 1 day for 131 years for pre-Gregorian reform period (3425/131=26) by Planetarium software. It is clarified that the translations of above-stated verses differ slightly at a few places from traditional translations as these have been done again by using Sanskrit-Hindi and Sanskrit-English dictionaries taking the help of learned Sanskrit scholars. It has been ensured that translations recorded above are entirely correct and do not suffer from any error whatsoever.

It is further clarified that the meanings of the terms afflicting *(पीड्यते)*, looking at benevolently *(विरोचन)* or in a malevolent manner, i.e. affliction *(आक्रम्य)* are all different. These could not be taken to mean as a location in the same house/ constellation or in the opposite house; in the adjacent house or in a house located at a stated distance. Dr Achar and other scholars have normally adopted the meaning of all these Sanskrit terms as a location in the same house. We could probably use the common expression 'aspecting' for all these positions. Given below is a table containing a list of Planets 'aspecting' / 'afflicting' other houses (Rashis) in common astrological usage, since ancient times.

Object	Aspects House /Raashi /constellation
Sun	7th from its position
Moon	7th -do-
Venus	7th -do-
Mars	4th, 7th, 8th -do-
Jupiter	3rd , 7th, 9th, -do-
Saturn	3rd, 7th,10th - do-

Therefore, a more appropriate position of a planet has to be adopted for arriving at more accurate dates of Mahabharat references. There is absolutely no reason to ignore these as irrelevant or inconsistent, as has been done by some other scholars and scientists. Therefore, before concluding, all these different locations/positions have to be verified.

It would be interesting to have a look at the Stellarium Skyshot depicting all these positions/locations of seven planets vis-à-vis 14 constellations described in cantos 14 to 18 of chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva on 10th October, 3139 BCE, just a few hours before the near-solar eclipse. Needless to add, that this Skyview is not observable on any other date during 25000 years before or after this date.

Hastinapur, India: 10th October, 3139 BCE, 19:50 – all astronomical positions described in Mahabharat have been shown in the yellow text; Stellarium version 1.19.0 of 2019

As per the sky simulation generated using Stellarium and displayed above, on 10th October, almost all the positions of stars and planets, described in chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva, can be observed in the sky -

Mars is entering its own house, i.e. Aries in Vakragati, while moving back from Taurus. **Jupiter (***Brihaspati*) is in *Shravan Nakshatra* (in Capricornus). **Saturn** in Scorpius is afflicting 10th constellation Uttarphalguni in Leo. **Venus** in Virgo is aspecting Poorva Bhadrapad and Uttarbhadrapad in seventh constellation Pisces. **Mercury** is in Jyeshta in Scorpius. Both **Sun** and **Moon,** in Jyeshta in Scorpius constellation, are afflicting Rohini in Taurus. **Mercury** is also aspecting Jyeshta in Scorpius. **Venus** is stationed between Chitra and Swati and is thus located between Virgo and Libra constellations. **Jupiter** is going around Shrawan in Brahmrashi i.e. Capricornus. *Lohitang, i.e.* **Mars** in backwards-forward motion is looking stable/static.

For this particular Skyview, it would be fascinating to have a look at the Sky simulation generated by using Planetarium Gold software (version 4.1), which displays the above stated planetary positions with greater clarity on 14th September, 3139 BCE. This was just a few hours before the beginning of *Kartik Amavasya* when a near solar eclipse was observable. The difference of 26 days in the ephemeris of two softwares has been explained already.

Hastinapur (29°N, 77°E): Planetary positions a few hours before the solar eclipse of Kartik Amavasya on 14th September, 3139 BC (18:30 hrs), (Planetarium)

This sky view is exclusive, and it does not get repeated on any other date during the twenty-five thousand years before or after 14th September, 3139 BCE. It certainly does not get repeated in/around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, in 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE, which are the dates of Mahabharat war worked out by some other reputed scholars. For this reason, the date of war in 3139 BCE appears to be almost indisputable. There was a lunar eclipse on first *Kartik* Purnima of 3139 BCE (on 31 Aug, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium and on 26th September, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium), followed by a near-solar eclipse on *Kartik* Amavasya (14th Sep, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium, and 11th October, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium). All the above stated planetary positions could be observed on 10th October, 3139 BCE, just a few hours before the solar eclipse on 11th October, 3139 BCE.

Eleven *Akshauhini Sena* of Duryodhana and *Seven Akshauhini Sena* of Yudhishthir had by now assembled in Kurukshetra. Duryodhana wanted to start the war in Pushya Nakshatra i.e. on 29th October, 3139 BCE. Yudhishthir and other Pandavas were keen to avoid the slaughter of their elders and their cousins. They were, therefore, willing to compromise with Kurus even if they agreed to give five villages to five Pandavas. Lord Krishna also was keen to make last-ditch efforts to avoid war which would lead to large scale destruction and slaughter. Therefore, in the month of Kartika itself, after the end of autumn season (*Patajharh*) and beginning of winter season *(Hemant Ritu)*, Shri Krishna left Upaplavya of Matsyadesh (Jaipur region) for Hastinapur on his last peace mission in Revati Nakshatra (5/83/6-7).

कौमुदे मासि रेवत्यां शरदन्ते हिमागमे।
स्फीतसस्य सुखे काले कल्पः सत्त्ववतां वर ।। उद्योग पर्व, 5/83/7

5/83/7 - Meaning: In the month of *Kaumuda* (Kartika) under the constellation of Revati, after the passing away of autumn and in the dewy season when the earth had an abundance of crops, that foremost of men, *Janardan left for Hastinapur for negotiating a peace settlement with Duryodhana.*

All these astronomical positions could be clearly seen in the sky on 21st October, 3139 BCE at 18:00 hours from Upaplavya in Matsya Desh (i.e. Jaipur Region) in the month of *Kartik*, which had begun on 26th September, 3139 BCE. It was just 10 days after the solar eclipse of 11th October, 3139 BCE, that Krishna left for his last peace mission –

Sky-view on 21st October, 3139 BCE, 18.00 hours from Jaipur (26.91°N, 75.78°E); Moon near Revathi Nakshatra in the month of Kartik (Stellarium version 0.19.0/2019)

After reaching Hastinapur, Lord Krishna tried to persuade Duryodhana to make peace with Pandavas. However, Duryodhana said, "I can sacrifice my life, my kingdom, my everything, but I can never live in peace with the Pandavas". Consequently, the peace mission failed, Shri Krishna went back to Upaplavya (Jaipur-Alwar region of Rajasthan), and the war was going to begin. Not wanting to take sides, Balaram left for 42 days of pilgrimage in *Pushya Nakshatra when* Moon was in Cancer on the 4th day of Margashirsha Month that followed the Kartik Month. This was on 29th Oct. 3139 BCE. Balaram was supposed to come back after 42 days in *Shrawan* Nakshatra (9/34/5-6). See the sky view from Upaplavya, Rajasthan as per Stellarium software on 29th October 3139 BCE (Jaipur: 26.91°N, 75.78°E), when Moon was in Puṣhya Nakshatra -

29th October, 3139 BCE, Upaplavya (Jaipur: 26.91°N, 75.78°E) when Moon was in Pushya Nakshatra; sky shot of Stellarium (version 0.19.0/2019, NASA JPL DE 431 ephemeris)

After this event, the forces of Yudhishthir started moving from Upaplavya to Kurukshetra, and that would have taken at least 4-5 days. Forces of Duryodhana started moving from Hastinapur to Kurukshetra, and that would have taken around 3-4 days. After that, they set up tents and camps and made arrangements of provisions, weapons, and other utilities. At that time, the forces of Duryodhana and of Yudhishthir stood opposite to each other; ready to fight the most devastating war in the history of mankind! Sage Vyas had come somewhere around that time and had talked about the inauspicious omens, which indicated massive destruction.

After talking about the ominous planetary positions and eclipses *etc.*, which have been dated and discussed above, the great sage Vyas said in a sorrowful tone to Dhritarashtra, "Protect your name and fame, kingdom and race. Let the Pandavas have their kingdom and let the Kuru race live in peace." Dhritrashtra then replied that his sons did not obey him, and he thought that the destructive war was

destined to take place. If kings performing the duties of Kshatriyas die in battle, they would go to heaven and attain eternal happiness. Sage Vyas offered to bestow sight on Dhritarashtra, but he did not wish to see the slaughter of his near and dear ones, although he expressed the desire to hear the account of the battle in minute details. Sage Vyas then granted a divine vision to Sanjay, son of Gavalgani, and alter-ego of Dhritarashtra. He told Dhritarashtra that Sanjay would narrate all the details of the battle being fought at any time; weapons would not kill him; he would not get exhausted and would come back from the battle alive every time. Thereafter, Sage Vyas went away.

Sanjay narrated all relevant details of pious land Bharatavarsha to Dhritarashtra; the details of its hills and rivers, kingdoms and provinces *etc.* After that, Sanjay went to the battleground in Kurukshetra and came back to narrate the details to Dhritarashtra only on the 11th day after the demise of Bhishma Pitamah (6/13/1).

First of all, there is need to know the rules of ethical conduct of war accepted in times of Mahabharat war, as otherwise some of the events would appear to be baffling to modern-day readers who do not know about the ethics of war during Mahabharat times –

1. Fighting must begin no earlier than sunrise and must end precisely at sunset.
2. Hostiles could mix freely like friends after the sunset.
3. No more than one warrior may attack a single warrior.
4. Two warriors may fight a "duel", or engage in personal combat, only if they carry the same weapons and are on the same type of mount (on foot, on a horse, or in a chariot).
5. No warrior may kill or injure a warrior who has surrendered.
6. No warrior may kill or injure an unarmed or an unconscious warrior.
7. No warrior may kill or injure a warrior whose back is turned away.
8. The rules specific to each weapon must be followed.
9. No warrior may attack a woman.
10. No warrior may strike an animal not considered a direct threat.
11. Warriors may not engage in any unfair war practices.

(Courtesy: http://Mahabharat-research.com/military%20academy/)

Most of these rules were generally followed, but some were violated on some occasions like the opportunity to take direct revenge or under some other pressing circumstances to save one's life. However, any violations of these moral principles regulating the war were generally looked upon as wrong and shameful.

After Lord Krishna had failed to win over Karna to the side of Pandavas, he had suggested to him that let the war begin on *Jyeshta Amavasaya* (No Moon day) of Margshirsha month.

सप्तमाच्चापि दिवसादमावास्या भविष्यति I
संग्रामो युज्यतां तस्यां तामाहुः शक्रदेवताम् II 5/142/18

Meaning: In seven days there will be Amavasya, *i.e.* no moon day; and on that day let us engage in war as that day is favourite to Shakra, the other name of Lord Indra. Indra being the presiding deity of Jyeshta; this verse means that no-moon was in Jyeshta Nakshatra.

The war actually started on this Margshirsha Amavasya day when no-moon was near Jyeshta in Scorpius (5/142/18), which happened to be 8th November, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium. See the sky-view of this historic day!

8th Nov. 3139 BCE, war started on no-moon near Jyeshtha (Scorpius) during Margashirsha after Sermon of Gita; (Stellarium, version 0.19.0/2019, NASA JPL DE 431 ephemeris)

The month of Margashirsha, with the full moon in Mrigashira Nakshatra, had begun 15 days before the beginning of the war on Jyeshta Amavasya of Margashirsha month as is displayed in the sky simulation of 24th October, 3139 BCE, displayed hereunder -

Sky view on 24th October, 3139 BCE, with full Moon in Mrigashira, heralding the beginning of the month of Mrigashirsha; Sky shot of Stellarium version 0.19.0/2019, NASA JPL DE 431

The sky simulation of Margashirsha Amavasya, displayed by stellarium on 8th November, 3139 BCE, with No Moon in Jyeshta Nakshatra, *i.e.* Scorpius Constellation is displayed 26 days earlier, i.e. on 13th October, 3139 BCE, by Planetarium software. The war started on Margashirsha Amavasya day after the profound sermon of Gita was imparted to Arjun by Shri Krishna. Bhishma fell on the 10th day, and Sanjay went to report all the war events to Dhritarashtra on the 11th day (MB. 6/13/1-4). In fact, the entire narration by Sanjay to Dhritarashtra of Pandu and Kuru forces standing opposite to each other, the reluctance of Arjun to fight

against the grandsire and the preceptors, Krishna preparing him for war after Gita Upadesh, and then the beginning of war in which Bhishma Pitamah was felled on the 10th day starts from chapter 13 of Bhishma Parva. Sanjay transmitted the entire sermon of Gita to Dhritarashtra, as was conveyed by Lord Krishna to Arjun. It is interesting to mention here that, till date, 11th day of the waxing phase of Moon in Margashirsha Month is celebrated as Gita Jayanti Day all over India and that is the reliability and authenticity of the public memory coming down for thousands of years!

Forces of both Kauravas and Pandavas had settled in the camps and tents. With a desire to conquer the opponent, the warriors stood facing each other, and they roared to the accompaniment of loud sounds of conches and drums. The Kurus formed the battle array under the command of invincible Bhishma and Pandavas formed the counter array under the leadership of Dhrishtadhyumna, son of the king of Panchal. Krishna then advised Arjun to offer prayers to Goddess Durga so that he succeeded in defeating the enemy. **Yudhishthir at the time was around 70 years old,** Bhima and Duryodhana were in their 68th year; Arjun and Shri Krishna were around 66 years old, whereas twins had entered their 64th year.

CHAPTER 30

Shri Krishna imparted the Sermon of Gita to Arjun; Yudhishthir sought benedictions of elders before the beginning of the war

After witnessing the first phase of the battle, Sanjay returned to Dhritarashtra to submit a report on what he had seen. He told Dhritarashtra that Arjun agreed to fight only after Krishna conveyed to him the excellent knowledge of Bhagavad-Gita and that Bhishma had fallen on the 10th day of the war. Dhritarashtra lamented the fall of Bhishma and enquired from Sanjay, the warriors of whose side started the battle and the heroes of which side were full of confidence and cheerfulness. Sanjay informed that on the side of Pandavas, unbeatable Shri Krishna was the charioteer for Arjun and they looked like *Narayan and Nar*. Shri Krishna blew his conch Panchajanya, and Arjun blew his Conch Devadatta. All other great heroes like kings of Kashi, Panchal, Matsya, and Dhrishtadhyumna blew their conches separately in great excitement.

Sanjay reported to Dhritarashtra that 11 divisions (Akshauhinis) of Duryodhana's army and seven divisions of Yudhishthir's army stood face to face in the battleground of Kurukshetra. At that time Arjun requested Shri Krishna to take his chariot between the two armies so that he could know who had come there to fight on behalf of wicked-minded Duryodhana. Madhava took the chariot in the middle, and Partha saw grandsire Bhishma, preceptor Drona, and many other kinsmen and preceptors. Seeing those venerated elders and blood-relations, Partha (another name of Arjun) felt unsettled and told Madhava that his body was trembling, the

mind was whirling, and Gandiva was slipping from his hand. Arjun further said that he did not wish to commit the sin of killing those elders and relatives to get sovereignty. Arjun also added that by killing preceptors, even if they are taking an evil side, for the sake of worldly gains, the victory would also be most sinful as well as most painful; therefore he did not wish to fight.

At this juncture, through Arjun, Lord Krishna passed on to the World the great philosophy of Bhagavad Gita. He asked Arjun to do his duty (*Karma*) by fighting the war in order to protect dharma and righteousness. He also added that the soul is eternal and indestructible; only the body is perishable. The time of imparting sermon of Gita must have been sometime before the beginning of the war on *Margashirsha Amavasya* on 8th November, 3139 BCE. It was the month of Margashirsha, in the early winter season, when the Sun was in *Dakshinayan* (Southward movement).

Shri Krishna propounded profound philosophy of Gita to Arjun before the commencement of the war

Shri Krishna told Arjun that he need not grieve about the death of relatives and friends as the life of embodied beings had neither any beginning nor any end. They simply pass from one existence to another. The soul is eternal and changes bodies just as we change clothes. All beings are sure to die, and those who die are bound to be reborn. Shri Krishna said –

नैनं छिद्रन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ (MB 6/26/23, BG 2/23)

Meaning thereby that the soul is eternal. A weapon cannot cut the soul, fire cannot burn it, water cannot moist it, and wind cannot make the soul dry. After that, Lord Krishna explained that the soul is all-pervading, everlasting, and eternal, but it is neither perceivable nor conceivable. It will never get cut or burnt; it will neither get drowned nor get dried up. Knowing that soul is everlasting, Arjun should not grieve for the lives of the heroes who get killed in the war, because they would all be reborn. If Arjun as a Kshatriya failed to fight that righteous battle, he would incur the sin of abandoning his duty and would suffer the fate of everlasting infamy. The courtiers and the elders, whether they are preceptors or grandfathers, who fail to protect the honour of a woman in an open Assembly, deserve to be eliminated. The men belonging to that society, who silently watch and tolerate such sinful behaviour, also deserve to be killed.

हतो वा प्राप्यसि स्वर्गम्, जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महिम्।
तस्मात् उत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः॥ (MB 6/26/37, BG 2/37)

Shri Krishna added that if Arjun and his brothers got killed during the war, they would attain heaven. However, if they were victorious, then they would enjoy sovereignty over the whole earth. Therefore, the son of Kunti should resolve to fight the war in all sincerity. Lord Krishna then asked Arjun to get up, determined to engage whole-heartedly in the battle, considering victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain as all the same.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥ (6/26/47)

Lord Krishna also told Arjun that his concern was only with actions and not with their fruits. Let not the fruits of his actions be his motive; therefore, he should not feel attached to his actions. To perform his duties with devotion and sincerity was his sacrosanct duty. Lord Krishna continued saying that Arjun should fight the righteous war considering success or failure as the same.

Arjun then enquired what compels a man to commit sinful actions. Lord Krishna explained that **desire** was at the root of all sins. As fire is obscured by smoke, a mirror by dust, so this world is obscured by desire. This desire resides in all five senses as well as in mind. It uses these faculties to cause delusion in the minds of human beings by obscuring their knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, all actions must be performed with detachment and with devotion to the Supreme Being. It must be remembered that the mind is superior to the senses; knowledge

is greater than the mind; intellect is higher than the mind, and super-human consciousness is supreme.

After that, Arjun enquired if it was better to perform actions or to renounce actions. Lord Krishna replied that action was undoubtedly a superior course, as even renunciation is only detached action but not inaction. Shri Krishna then explained to Arjun that, he, as well as Arjun, had many lives in the past as embodiments of human beings are not voluntary. Shri Krishna remembered these all, but Arjun did not. He explained that Lord Krishna as Supreme Brahman reincarnates himself when righteousness wanes and unrighteousness increases:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत:।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
परित्राणाय साधूनाम् विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ (MB 6/28/7-8, BG 4/7-8)

Meaning: Wherever and whenever O Arjun! Righteousness declines and sinful conduct predominates, then he (as Supreme Brahman) reincarnates himself. He did so for the protection of the noble, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness. Lord Krishna at that time had in mind the deterioration in the moral standards in society as a whole. Duryodhana could illegally grab the share of the Pandavas; he could make several vicious attempts to kill all the Pandavas through treachery; neither the king nor the ministers or the elders were capable of protecting the honour of women. All such people deserved to be killed in a righteous war.

After that, Lord Krishna advised Arjun that with the sword of wisdom, he should cut all the doubts about fighting the righteous war for the protection of dharma. He must perform the duties of a Kshatriya by killing those who had perpetuated injustice and who had tried to disrobe Draupadi in Kuru Assembly. Draupadi here only represented the honour of women in society. It is probably for this reason that Bal Gangadhar Tilak described Gita as Karmayog Shastra and he had opined that knowledge (jnana yoga) and devotion (bhakti yoga) are helpful adjuncts to promote Gita's doctrine of righteous action (karma yoga). Krishna at that time also reminded Arjun that this was a war between righteousness and unrighteousness, dharma and adharma and virtue and wickedness. He added that it was Arjun's duty to slay anyone who supported the cause of sinfulness, or injustice.

Lord Krishna, after that, added that he who performs his actions/duties without seeking the fruit is a true Yogi. He, who has a disciplined and controlled mind, liberated from desires, is a true yogi. They understand that the Supreme Brahman, also known as Cosmic Spirit, governs the material as well as the divine

aspects of the universe. The yogi who continually meditates on the Supreme Lord, he unites with Him and gets out of the cycle of rebirth. This Supreme Brahman is the unborn eternal, has no beginning and no end; all existences derive from Him and reside in Him. Lord Krishna clarified that he himself was that Supreme Lord and that He pervaded the entire Universe. Arjun at that time expressed a deep desire to see that Universal Form of Shri Krishna.

On Arjun's request, Shri Krishna displayed his universal form, the *Vishvarupam* or we could say the Cosmic Reality, wherein *atman* and *pramatman* pervade the entire existence. Arjun could see all the creatures of heaven and earth in that Divine Form. The splendour of that Exalted Being was equal to the light emitted of a thousand suns. He could see Brahma seated on a lotus throne. He could see the crown, mace, and discus, glowing all around. Arjun beheld that this *Vishvarupam* had permeated the entire space between earth and heaven. He could see many seers, sages, and siddhas. Arjun was astonished to see all the sons of Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Karna and many other Pandava and Kaurava warriors were rushing into the fearful mouths of that Universal Form just as the moths run swiftly into a blazing fire.

Arjun was frightened as well as astonished to see that *Vishvarupam* and enquired who He was? That Supreme Being replied that he was Time, which is responsible for both creation and destruction. At that time, this Supreme Brahman was engaged in subduing the world, which had become wicked and immoral. Lord Krishna clarified that all those warriors already stood slain by Him and Arjun was only to become an instrument:

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम्।
मयैवैते निहता: पूर्वमेव निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन्।। (MB 6/35/33 BG 11/33)

Meaning: Lord Krishna then addressed Arjun, saying, "Arouse O Arjun and gain glory! Conquering your foes enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By me alone are they slain already. You be only the tool, *i.e.* instrument. Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors as well, who are already doomed by me."

Having heard these words of Keshava, Arjun in an Ecstasy of adoration, astonishment, and fear showered praises on Supreme Lord and begged to be pardoned for whatever disobedience or disrespect he might have ever shown to Lord Krishna. He then requested him to come back to his original form. To the relief of Arjun Vasudeva quickly resumed his original state of Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu.

After that, Lord Krishna explained to Arjun Bhakti Yoga, saying that those who have supreme love for the Supreme Lord can attain Him. Those who understand

the difference between the body and the soul can attain liberation from the material world. The ultimate purpose of life was to detach oneself from the material world and understand the Supreme Brahman and surrender in devotion. Blessed Lord explained that the soul is eternal, and after the death of one body, it is reborn. The demoniac qualities like cruelty, greed, anger, and lust ruin the soul, and it is reborn in very low forms of life. However, those who have divine qualities and live their lives according to the scriptures gradually obtain spiritual perfection and attain moksha, i.e. salvation. Lord Krishna explained the three qualities of *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas; Sattva* being the superior most quality.

Finally, Arjun wanted to know about the true nature of *Sanyas*. Shri Krishna explained that renunciation of action is not *sanyas*. Actions, particularly charities, sacrifices and penances, must be performed without desire for fruits. *Sattva* action is performed without any attachment and without any desire for fruit; *Rajas* action is one which is performed with a desire for fruit, and *Tamas* action is malicious and carried out with delusion. Performing one's duties with a pure mind and with devotion to the Supreme Brahman, a person achieves that state which is eternal and imperishable. Therefore what is to be renounced is not the action but the desire for the fruits of action.

To conclude, we could say that Arjun's problems were social, emotional, and ethical; however, Lord Krishna's teachings were supra-social, supra-ethical, and spiritual. This is subtly suggestive of the truth that predicament of human consciousness can find a solution by transcending into super-human consciousness. Gita teaches that human self is eternal and timeless; it is a minute particle of the divine cosmic energy; it is *atman* which is a particle of *pramatman*. Through righteous action, yoga, and devotion, one could attain salvation, which is a permanent state of becoming a part of the Supreme Being.

Hearing the sermon of Bhagavad-Gita from Lord Krishna, Arjun's delusion was gone, his doubts were dispelled, and he picked up his Gandiva ready to fight with full force. Watching that Arjun had picked up his weapons, the great car-warriors of the Pandava army made tremendous noises, blew their conches, and beat their drums. Seeing the two armies marching against each other like two oceans proceeding from two opposite directions, Yudhishthir suddenly put aside his armour, cast aside his mighty weapons, alighted from his chariot, and with joined hands started moving towards the Kuru army. Not knowing his intentions behind this move and quite baffled with this action of Yudhishthir, Arjun and his other brothers also descended from their chariots and started following Yudhishthir in deep anxiety. Yudhishthir actually had gone to seek the blessings of Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Shalya before fighting with the enemy.

Yudhishthir, followed by his brothers, then bowed before Bhishma saying that left with no other choice they would fight against their grandsire and that they had come to seek his blessings. Bhishma then blessed him with victory in the war. Bhishma also added that bound to the wealth of Kurus he was fighting on their behalf. Then in response to a particular request from Yudhishthir asking how they could kill unconquerable grandsire during the war, Bhishma replied that the time of his death had not yet come. However, he would not fight against a woman or someone who was earlier a woman. Then the great Pandava hero bowed before Drona, sought his blessings, and asked him the same question. Drona replied where there was righteousness; there was Krishna. Where there is Krishna, victory resides there. Then he told Yudhishthir that so long as Drona was fighting, wielding his weapons, nobody could kill him. However, if he withdrew himself and abandoned his arms due to any anger or disappointment, then he could be killed.

After that, Yudhishthir bowed before preceptor Kripa and sought his blessings. He told that he would surely fight against the Pandavas with all his might, but he would pray for the victory of Pandavas. Finally, Yudhishthir, accompanied by his brothers, bowed before Shalya, and sought his permission before engaging in war. Maternal Uncle Shalya granted him the permission, wished for his victory, even though he added that he would surely fight on behalf of Pandavas' enemies. Yudhishthir then sought only one favour from Shalya that if he happened to act as Karna's charioteer to fight against Arjun at any stage during the war, he should try to weaken his prowess. Shalya assured that Yudhishthir's desire would be fulfilled. Kings and warriors assembled there appreciated the humility of the Pandavas. Yudhishthir then invited the kings and warriors assembled there to come and join them in the fight against sinful Duryodhana. Duryodhana's brother Yuyutsu, who was Dhritarashtra's son through a maid-servant, then went over to the side of Pandavas, believing that righteousness was on their side.

The war began on *Margashirsha Amavasya* (8th November, 3139 BCE), with Bhishma Pitamah as the Commander-in-chief of Duryodhana's army. Military science was much developed; a four-division army comprising of infantry, horse riders, elephant riders and chariot riders was built in nine steps. The weapons used included *astras* (missiles like chakras and arrows), *sastras* (swords, spears, and axes), *dandayuddha* (mace and musala) and *yantrayuddha* (firearms like sataghni and bhusundi). Some similar weapons, which are considered to be more than 4500 years old, have been found during excavations in the relevant geographic locations. Comprehensive details have been given in chapter entitled **"Archaeological evidence has revealed that most of the excavated Harappan sites dated around 3000 BCE were located in the kingdoms described in Mahabharat".** Every day,

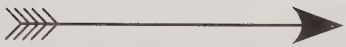
there used to be a different kind of a battle-array. At least 16 types of battle arrays, i.e. *vyuha-rachnas* are described in the Epic.

However, a crucial question has to be answered here! If Shri Krishna had imparted Sermon of Gita on *Margashirsha Amavasya*, why is Gita Jayanti celebrated on *Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi*? The answer is available in the text of Mahabharat itself with all relevant details in chapter 13 of Bhishma Parva. Actually, Sanjay was in the battlefield for the first 10 days of the war. He saw Arjun's reluctance to fight against Bhishma Pitamah and Guru Dronacharya; he had heard from close range sermon of Bhagavad-Gita imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjun that he must perform his duty of fighting the war against unrighteousness and adharma. Sanjay was there in the battlefield till Bhishma Pitamah collapsed on the 10th day.

After that, Sanjay came running to Dhritarashtra and started narrating to him the events relating to the war by first disclosing that "The son of Shantanu, Bhishma has collapsed. That foremost of all warriors that prowess personified, that grandfather of the Kurus, today lies on the bed of arrows" (Bhishma Parva - 6/13/3-4). Dhritarashtra wanted to know in detail about how the war began, what happened in the 10 days, and how was the invincible warrior Bhishma Pitamah felled in the battle. After that, in chapters 14 to 124, of Bhishma Parva, Sanjay narrated the entire account of the war which he had seen from close quarters in Kurukshetra. Moreover, he also reproduced the Bhagavad Gita Sermon transmitted by Lord Krishna to the great warrior Arjun in order to prompt as well as inspire him to fight the war for just cause and the protection of dharma. Sanjay narrated all those verses of Bhagavad Gita for the knowledge of Dhritrashtra, as also for the benefit of the whole world on Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi.

This was naturally done on 11th day of the waxing phase of moon in the month of Margashirsha in 3139 BCE, as the war had begun on Amavasya in Margashirsha month and Bhishma Pitamah collapsed on the 10th day. It would have taken at least one day for Sanjay to go from the battlefield of Kurukshetra to report the details of events to Dhritarashtra. That is probably the reason that Gita Jayanti is celebrated on *Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi*. In fact, close reading in detail of Mahabharat has revealed that Sanjay was very frequently commuting between battleground in Kurukshetra and the Camp of King Dhritarashtra. After consigning the events relating to the war to his memory, he went and narrated these to Dhritarashtra in detail. In respect of Guru Dronacharya also Sanjay had first reported the death of Drona on 15th day of the war as is revealed in chapter 8 of Drona Parva. After that, in succeeding chapters 9 to 214 of Drona Parva, Sanjay narrated the details of war, prowess with which Drona fought and how was he finally killed.

Chapter 31



The most disastrous war in the history of humanity actually started in Kurukshetra

Both the armies were now ready for war. Horses neighed, elephants trumpeted, warriors roared, and conches were blown. On the first day, Bhishma himself was leading the charge and Dushasana accompanied by large forces was protecting Bhishma from all sides. Bhima was leading the charge on behalf of Pandavas. When Bhishma shot the arrows from his effulgent chariot, there was destruction all around. Abhimanyu at that time got agitated and attacked the grandsire. He succeeded in wounding Kritavarma and Shalya. He successfully shot some arrows at the grandsire and also succeeded in breaking Kripa's bow. One of Abhimanyu's arrows brought grandsire's palm tree flag down from his chariot. In his heart of hearts, grandsire was pleased with the display of such dexterity by his great-grandson.

Nevertheless, following the dharma of war, grandsire Bhishma charged at Abhimanyu with full force. Uttar, son of king Virat, and Dhrishtadhyumna, son of king Drupada, came forward to relieve Abhimanyu and attacked the grandsire. Uttar's elephants then trampled the horses of Shalya's chariot. Furious Shalya threw a spear at Uttar, it went and pierced his chest, and he fell down dead.

Watching with anger that Shalya had killed prince Uttar; his brother Shveta, son of king Virat, charged using his chariot and attacked Shalya. Seven chariot warriors came from all sides to protect Shalya. Sharp arrows were shot from both sides, but people there were amazed at the dexterity displayed by Shveta.

Duryodhana quickly sent more forces to relieve Shalya. In the meantime, Shveta succeeded in smashing Bhishma Pitamaha's chariot to pieces. Grandsire, however, shot a fatal arrow at Shveta and he fell down dead. After that, grandsire killed thousands of soldiers of the Pandava army. Dushasana blew his horn and danced in joy. Thus, Pandava forces suffered a considerable set back on the first day of the battle. Yudhishthir felt apprehensive, and all the Pandavas consulted Shri Krishna, who told them that the Pandavas were destined to be victorious in the end.

For the war on the second day, Dhrishtadhyumna plugged all loopholes and re-arrayed his army. Elated Duryodhana was inviting as well as inspiring his forces to fight until the end. Bhishma attacked the Pandava forces and killed thousands of soldiers. Arjun then shared his anguish with Lord Krishna that if the war went in this manner, the entire Pandava army would get destroyed at the hands of Bhishma. Shri Krishna at that time drove Dhananjay's chariot towards Bhishma. Duryodhana had instructed his forces never to let the grandsire expose himself to any danger. Accordingly, a large number of warriors surrounded Bhishma and attacked Arjun. Arjun killed or vanquished the warriors who had intervened in support of Bhishma. The movement of Arjun's chariot at lightning speed and his ability at fighting so many warriors at the same time instilled some fear even in Duryodhana. He expressed his distress to Bhishma, saying that even when Bhishma and Drona were alive and fighting on his behalf, it appeared that they would not take quick steps to kill Arjun.

Then followed deadly combat between Bhishma and Arjun, who were the greatest warriors on earth and their chariots were drawn by white horses. The countless arrows flew at each other, and in that battle, Arjun and Krishna were hit by Bhishma's shafts; their wounds started bleeding. Arjun got furious, and a scary battle thereafter followed. At another place in the same battlefield, another fierce battle was being fought between Drona and Dhrishtadhyumna. Drona succeeded in inflicting severe wounds on Dhrishtadhyumna. He retaliated with full force, but Drona succeeded in breaking his bow by shooting a sharp arrow, and after that, he also succeeded in killing his charioteer. Left with no choice, Dhrishtadhyumna jumped from his chariot and fought with his mace. Just at that time, Bhima saw what was happening and covered Drona with a shower of arrows and carried Dhrishtadhyumna to safety.

At that time, Duryodhana sent Kalinga forces to attack Bhima, but Bhima killed them ruthlessly, and they all trembled in fear. Bhishma then attacked Bhima with all his might. Just at that time Satyaki and Abhimanyu joined in support of Bhima. One of Satyaki's shafts brought Bhishma's chariot down, while his horses bolted uncontrolled carrying Bhishma away from the field. Pandava forces went wild

with enthusiasm; taking advantage of the situation they launched a fierce attack on Kuru forces. A very large number of soldiers and warriors of the Kaurava army were killed that day in the encounter. As the sun started setting in the west, Bhishma told Drona that fighting had to be stopped. The Kuru forces went back to their camps disheartened that day, whereas Pandava forces went back in a cheerful mood.

On the third day again Bhishma led Kuru forces and arrayed them in eagle formation. Duryodhana and his forces protected from the rear taking care of minutest details. Dhrishtadhyumna and Arjun arrayed their forces in a crescent formation, *i.e. vyuha*. It would not be out of place to mention here that there used to be different types of battle arrays (formations) every day in those days as per the need and perception of each Supreme Commander. On the right of Crescent formation stood Bhima and on the left Arjun, leading their respective divisions. Arjun launched a powerful attack, but Kuru army remained firm and made a counter-attack. Arrows were shot at Arjun like raindrops, although with his fantastic skill, he succeeded in creating a moving fortification around his chariot. At another location in the battlefield, Shakuni launched a fierce attack against Satyaki and Abhimanyu. Satyaki's chariot was broken, and he had to move quickly up to Abhimanyu's chariot. They launched a forceful counter attack causing enormous losses to Shakuni's armies.

Simultaneously, Drona and Bhishma launched a joint attack on Yudhishthir. Nakul and Sahadev quickly pitched in to defend their brother. Bhima and his son jointly attacked Duryodhana. With one of the arrows, Bhima sent Duryodhana into a swoon. His charioteer quickly drove him away from the battlefield and there spread confusion all around in Kuru forces. Bhishma and Drona quickly restored the confidence of Kuru forces and Duryodhana regained his consciousness. Duryodhana at that time admonished grandsire Bhishma asking him why he did not say earlier that he loved Pandavas and that he would not kill them, then Duryodhana could have devised a different strategy. Bhishma, however, replied that he had grown old, yet he was doing his utmost. Stung by Duryodhana's accusations, Bhishma rallied his forces and launched a most severe attack against the Pandavas. Thousands of soldiers of the Pandava army were killed and out of fear they began to scatter. Krishna then told Arjun that the time had come to make short work of Bhishma.

Arjun asked Shri Krishna to take his chariot towards Bhishma; by shooting three arrows, he broke the grandsire's bow. Bhishma took another bow and shot at Arjun with unerring aim. Krishna was not happy with the way Arjun was fighting with the grandsire for his heart was not into it. Then out of anger, Krishna said that

our armies would get demoralized in this manner and if Arjun did not wish to kill Bhishma, Krishna himself would have to kill him. Then picking up his discus (Sudarshana chakra) Krishna proceeded to kill Bhishma. Arjun pleaded him to come back and promised to fight with his heart and soul put into it. Arjun attacked Kaurava forces furiously, and by evening quite a few thousand Kuru soldiers were sent to Yama's domain. At sunset, the battle was stopped.

On the fourth day, the war resumed. Bhishma, surrounded by powerful Kuru army, looked like Indra surrounded by gods. Five Kuru heroes launched a combined attack against Abhimanyu. Dhrishtadhyumna launched a counter-attack against Shalya, but his bow was broken with an arrow shot by Shalya. Abhimanyu showered arrows on Shalya; Duryodhana and his warriors proceeded in support of Shalya, riding on their elephants. With iron mace in hand, Bhima descended from his chariot, attacked Kurus so furiously that the elephants ran helter-skelter, causing great havoc in Kaurava army. Duryodhana thereafter ordered an all-out attack against Bhima. A fierce battle followed, in which Bhima killed eight of Duryodhana's brothers. Duryodhana shot a well-aimed arrow at Bhima's chest. Ghatotkach saw his father being struck in this manner by Kauravas and in great fury, he charged on them. Bhishma and Drona were quite baffled at the might of Ghatotkach. Since it was nearing sunset, the battle was stopped for the day. Going back to the Tent, Duryodhana was almost in tears, having lost his eight brothers that day. The blind king Dhritarashtra also had plunged in grief, and he feared that Bhima would kill all his sons.

In the evening Duryodhana went to Bhishma's Tent and said to him in anguish that Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Ashwatthama were unbeatable great warriors. Yet, the Kuru armies were meeting daily defeats at the hands of sons of Kunti. Bhishma then told him that Pandavas were fighting for a just cause, therefore, dharma was on their side whereas Kurus were fighting with unjust intentions, following unrighteousness. All elders had advised him to make peace with Pandavas, but he did not listen. Even now he could think of making a peaceful settlement with the Pandavas. Destruction awaited Duryodhana if he continued to insult invincible Arjun and Krishna, who combined the might of Nar and Narayan. Disappointed and unhappy, Duryodhana went back to his tent.

Next morning on the fifth day, Bhishma arrayed the Kaurava forces. Bhima stood at the head of Pandava forces; Shikhandin, Dhrishtadhyumna, and Satyaki stood behind, whereas Yudhishthir, Nakul and Sahadev guarded the rear. Bhishma launched a fierce attack, and thousands of soldiers of the Pandava army were killed that morning. Arjun retaliated effectively. Duryodhana went to Drona and complained that he was not fighting the war with his full might because of his love

for Arjun. Drona then upbraided him severely saying he had no idea of strength and ability of Pandavas. Shalya, Drona and Bhishma launched a combined attack against Bhima. Shikhandin supported Bhima by raining sharp arrows. On the sight of Shikhandin, Bhishma moved away as he would not fight against Shikhandin who was born a girl. At another location on the battlefield, a large force was sent by Duryodhana to attack Satyaki. Bhima came and took away Satyaki in his chariot. Arjun killed thousands of soldiers who were sent by Duryodhana to launch an attack on him. As the sun went down, Bhishma gave orders to cease the fighting. The armies retired to their respective camps.

On the sixth day, the Pandava army was arrayed in *makar vyuha* (formation looking like a crocodile). In contrast, the Kaurava army was arrayed in *krauncha vyuha* (formation looking like a crane). Drona's charioteer was killed and holding the reins of horses himself; furious Drona slaughtered thousands of Pandava soldiers. Bhima then went to attack Duryodhana's brothers, and they all attacked him intending to take him, prisoner. He came down from his chariot with mace in hand, and a fierce fight followed. Dhrishtadhyumna drove his chariot into the enemy lines when single-handed Bhima wounded many Kuru princes and in the fight got wounded himself as well. Dhrishtadhyumna embraced him and took him into his chariot. In the battle that followed, Drona killed Dhrishtadhyumna's charioteer and horses; as a result, he had to seek a place in Abhimanyu's car. At one time even Duryodhana and Bhima came face to face. Bhima hit Duryodhana, who fell unconscious. Kripa extricated him and took him away in his chariot. After sunset, Yudhishthir was happy that both Bhima and Dhrishtadhyumna returned safely to the camp.

Severely wounded Duryodhana went to Bhishma and complained that war was going against them every day and grandsire was doing nothing about it. The grandsire soothed Duryodhana by saying that he himself, Drona, Shalya, Kripa, Ashwatthama, Trigarta and Shakuni all were ready to lay down their lives for him; therefore, he need not worry. Thus cheered up by the grandsire, Duryodhana went to the battlefield on the seventh day. Bhishma had ordered the army to be arrayed in *chakravyuha,* i.e. circular formation and Duryodhana stood radiant in the middle. Yudhishthir had arrayed his forces in *vajravyuha, i.e.* formation in the shape of a thunderbolt. Mahabharat gives details of at least 16 types of *vyuha rachnas,* i.e. battle arrays, which have been described in Box - 5—

Box - 5

Vyuha means a strategic formation; in the context of wars, it means arranging one's army in proper order for winning the battle. Among the many aspects of military science described in the *Mahabharat*, one crucial element is the construction of battle-array or formation (*Vyuha-Rachana*) on different days and under different circumstances. At least 16 types of strategic dispositions (*vyuhas*) of the soldiers are mentioned in the epic. These are:

1. Krauncha Vyuha – Formation looking like Krauncha bird
2. Garuda Vyuha - Formation looking like Eagle
3. Trishula Vyuha – Formation in the shape of a trident
4. Makara Vyuha – Crocodile shaped formation
5. Oormi Vyuha – Formation looking like ocean waves
6. Sakata Vyuha – Battle array looking like a cartwheel
7. Sarvatobhadra Vyuha - Battle array considered safe from all sides
8. Mandala Vyuha – Galaxy formation
9. Chakra Vyuha - Formation in concentric circles
10. Shuchimukha Vyuha – Formation in the shape of a needle
11. Ardh-Chandraakar Vyuha - Crescent-shaped formation
12. Padma Vyuha – blooming lotus Formation
13. Vajra Vyuha – Battle array in the form of a thunderbolt
14. Sringataka Vyuha – Formation looking like a horn
15. Sura and Asura Vyuhas – Battle arrays looking like gods and demons
16. Vichitra (Chakra+Padmagarbha+Sakata) Vyuha – Strange and baffling formation

Military formations and their knowledge were essential as otherwise, the soldiers would be clueless about how to fight and move in which direction. Explaining different vyuha-rachanas, *i.e.* military formations, was a necessary part of military training imparted to Kshatriyas during those ancient times.

Methods of expeditions, selection of a Commander, administration of the army, ethics for the warriors (*Kshatriya dharma*), laws of war, costumes and types of equipment, *etc.* were other aspects of military science were taught to the soldiers, and these have been discussed in the *Mahabharat*. Dronacharya was a master expert in all aspects of warfare.

(Courtesy: Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume VI, Page no. 361, Publisher - India Heritage Research Foundation, in association with Rupa & co. & http://Mahabharat-research.com/military%20academy/)

The battle was fiercely fought on the seventh day. In the battle between Drona and King Virat, another son of King Virat, named Sanga, had got killed. Ashwatthama defeated Drupad's son Shikhandin. Satyakai also was severely injured by Alambasa. Shalya attacked his nephews Nakul and Sahadev but fell unconscious on being hit by an arrow shot by Sahadev. After suffering so many setbacks, Yudhishthir was furious that day and urged all the kings and warriors to get united to slay Bhishma. Thus attacked, Bhishma wreaked havoc on Pandava army and slaughtered hundreds of warriors. Soon after sunset, Arjun proceeded towards his camp after vanquishing Susharma, King of Trigarta, and all the Pandava and Kaurava heroes went back to their respective camps.

On the eighth day, Bhishma organized his army in tortoise formation, and Dhrishtadhyumna arrayed Pandava army in three-pronged formation; Bhima, Satyaki, and Yudhishthir were at the head of each of the three spines. A very bitter battle was fought. Bhima killed eight of Duryodhana's brothers. Kauravs killed Iravan, Arjun's son through Ulupi. Arjun broke down and talked about the sin of fighting a war against kith and kin. He wished only if Duryodhana had agreed to give only five villages that sinful war could be avoided! A fierce fight followed between Ghatotkach and Duryodhana; the latter was saved by the king of Vanga in the nick of the moment. Bhishma sent a large army in support of Duryodhana whereas Bhima joined in support of Ghatotkach, killing five more sons of Dhritarashtra.

CHAPTER 32

The ninth and tenth day of war; Arjun and Shikhandin succeeded in knocking down Bhishma

In the morning of the ninth day of the war, Duryodhana poured his heart out and said many piercing words which upset the grandsire. He believed that grandsire was fighting the war without putting his heart and soul into it, and that is why every day the Kuru forces were suffering reverses. Bhishma at that time admonished Duryodhana saying that he was pouring his life for him like ghee on the sacrificial fire, yet he was not satisfied. He then added that he had already made it clear that he would neither fight against Shikhandin nor would kill the Pandavas. Kshatriyas are not supposed to lose heart and that Duryodhana, with the support of other warriors, should carry forward the war like a true Kshatriya. Thereafter, the grandsire said some reassuring words to cheer up Duryodhana and proceeded to issue instructions for arraying of forces in a particular manner.

A reassured Duryodhana called Dushasana and told him that Bhishma would put in his best in that day's battle but would not use weapons against Shikhandin. Therefore, a decisive battle should be fought, ensuring that grandsire is not exposed to Shikhandin's attacks. There were fierce combats between Satyaki and Ashwatthama and between Drona and Arjun. A little later, all the Pandavas launched a joint attack on Bhishma, who fought furiously and beat the Pandavas

back. Lord Krishna had realized that Arjun did not wish to kill Bhishma. He halted the chariot and reminded Arjun about the duties of a soldier. Arjun said that he would have liked to continue living in the forests if he knew he would have to kill grandsire Bhishma and preceptor Drona. On Krishna's prodding, he unwillingly moved towards Bhishma, who quickly shot the arrows and covered Arjun's advancing chariot. Arjun's shafts hit Bhishma's bow and broke it into two parts. Krishna was taking Arjun's chariot towards Bhishma unperturbed with skill. Telling Arjun that his heart was not in the fight, Krishna jumped down from the chariot and taking his discus proceeded angrily towards Bhishma. Arjun jumped down and ran behind Shri Krishna. He asked him not to break his vow of not using the weapons during the war and promised that he would kill Bhishma. Arjun brought Krishna back to the chariot and resumed the battle. Soon there was a sunset in the west, and the fighting ended for that day.

It was the 10th day of the battle. Arjun had come with a stronger resolve to slay Bhishma as only then the war would come to an end. Seating Shikhandin in front of him in the chariot driven by Madhava, Arjun attacked Bhishma. Shikhandin's darts pierced grandsire's chest, he was furious, but he restrained himself because he did not wish to strike Shikhandin with his weapons as he was born as a woman. Shikhandin and Arjun both started shooting sharp arrows at Bhishma, who hurled a spear at Arjun. Arjun cut it into pieces by shooting three arrows. Bhishma then dismounted the chariot with a sword and a shield in hand. His shield was cut into pieces by Arjun's arrows. Arjun and Shikhandin together shot innumerable arrows at Bhishma. These were sticking all over Bhishma's body without leaving an inch of intervening space. Bhishma after that fell headlong to the ground. At that time the hearts of Kuru warriors also fell along with him.

Bhishma's body did not touch the ground; it lay on a bed of arrows. However, he expressed anguish as his head was hanging unsupported. The princes ran to bring cushions but turning towards Arjun, Bhishma said that provide him a pillow befitting a warrior. Arjun then shot three arrows, and these were so placed that the grandsire's head found support. Bhishma then said that he had fallen when the sun was in southward movement *(Dakshinayan)* and that he would lie till it went into northward motion (*Uttarayan*). His soul would depart only when the sun turned northward (Bhishma Parva/6/120/102, 106).

भीष्मः कथं महात्मा सन् संस्थाता दक्षिणायने ।
इत्युक्त्वा प्रस्थिता हंसा दक्षिणामभीतो दिशम् I (6/120/102)
ऐश्वर्यभूतः प्राणानामुत्सर्गो हि यतो मम II
तस्मात् प्राणान् धारयिष्ये मुमूर्षरदगायने I (6/120/106)

Meaning: Bhishma at that time said that why should he give up his life when Sun was in the Southern Solstice *that is Dakshinayan*. Since giving up his life was under his control; therefore, he would continue to breathe till Sun is in Northern Solstice, *i.e. Uttarayan*.

Bhishma fell in the battlefield on *Margashirsha Shukla Dashmi* which was 10 days after the beginning of the war on *Margashirsha Amavasya* on 8th November, 3139 BCE. Thus, Bhishma had fallen on 18th November, 3139 BCE. The sun remained in *Dakshinayan* for 57 days after that and went into northward movement *(Uttarayan)* only on *Maagh Shukla Saptami,* which was on 14th January, 3138 BCE. This was 67th day after the beginning of the war; the very next day, which was 68th day after the war-beginning, Bhishma's soul departed when the sun was in *Uttarayan*. That day was *Maagh Shukla Ashtami,* i.e. 8th day of the waxing phase of Moon in Maagh Month; this day is celebrated as Bhishma Ashtami in India till date.

The grandsire again turned towards Arjun and told him that he was tormented by thirst. Identifying a spot near grandsire, Arjun shot an arrow which pierced the earth and there gushed out a stream of pure water which touched Bhishma's lips. With a lot of affection then Bhishma again addressed Duryodhana advising him to make peace with Arjun and other Pandavas and let the war stop. He invited Duryodhana's attention to the ability with which Arjun had created the water jet and added that he was the only one in the world who could operate the weapons presided over by Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Vishnu, Indra and Prajapati. Therefore, grandsire advised that peace should be concluded with Pandavas without any delay. Narrating the sequence of events before the demise of Bhishma, Sanjay then told Dhritarashtra that his son Duryodhana disliked the peace-loving and honest advice given by the grandsire and looked the other way.

When Karna learnt that Bhishma was lying wounded and dying, he ran to meet him and fell at his feet. The grandsire placed his hand on Karna's shoulder with great affection and told him that he was not Radha's son but was Kunti's firstborn. Grandsire added that he nurtured no hatred for him, but he disliked his ever-growing and unjustified hostility towards the Pandavas. Bhishma said that Karna was a warrior equal in prowess to Arjun and Krishna and that, before his death, the chapter of enmity with Pandavas should be closed and the era of friendship should begin. With folded hands, Karna replied that he also knew that he was Kunti's first-born, but Duryodhana had given him so much wealth, love and trust that he would like to repay with his life.

Even though Bhishma lay mortally wounded, Kauravas were keen to resume the war. Duryodhana's forces looked towards Karna to be their supreme commander. Karna then went and sought blessings of grandsire saying that Pandavas would

now deal heavy blows to Kauravas and combination of Krishna and Arjun would probably defeat them in war. Nevertheless, Karna wanted to fight on behalf of Duryodhana and sought grandsire's blessings. Bhishma conveyed his blessings and said that he should save Duryodhana if he could do so with his dexterity. After receiving the grandsire's benediction, Karna mounted his chariot and rode to the battlefield, giving immense pleasure to Kuru forces.

CHAPTER 33

Drona was appointed as the supreme commander of Kuru forces after Bhishma's fall, and he tried to capture Yudhishthir alive

Duryodhana and Karna consulted each other; Karna advised that Dronacharya should be installed as the supreme commander of Kuru forces. Duryodhana agreed and went to Dronacharya in the presence of kings and warriors and requested him to be the supreme commander of Kuru forces as under him they would become victorious. The warriors accepted the proposal with loud cheers. Drona also accepted this proposal willingly. Drona was installed as the supreme commander amidst thunderous applause. Kauravas were so thrilled and enthusiastic that they started feeling as if they had already won the war under Drona's leadership. The talk went around in the Kuru camps that great Bhishma did not wish to slay Pandavas and, therefore, had not put in his best in fighting the war against them. Drona arrayed the army in a circular formation. Inspired to fight the war till the very end, Karna went around in his chariot looking confident and courageous. Drona fought with unparalleled prowess and caused enormous losses to the Pandava forces.

As soon as Drona took over the command of Kuru forces, Duryodhana, Karna, and Dushasana had consultations. They knew about Drona's weakness for Arjun;

therefore, they hatched a conspiracy. They went to Drona and requested him to capture Yudhishthir alive and hand him over to them and that they did not wish to kill him and did not expect anything more from the preceptor. Drona heard this proposal with great satisfaction as he also did not like the idea of killing Pandava brothers, who had been his disciples. He told Duryodhana that Yudhishthir possessed a pure and pious soul and was without any enemies; therefore, not killing him was a right and noble decision. Drona then started imagining as if Duryodhana had turned suddenly noble and considerate towards Pandavas. He thought that, by capturing Yudhishthir alive, Duryodhana wanted to defeat Pandavas in the battle and then negotiate peace by giving them half share of the kingdom. By imagining such unrealistic things, Drona fell into the trap and worked whole-heartedly to devise a strategy to capture Yudhishthir alive. Duryodhana, on the other hand, was relying on the goodness of Yudhishthir thinking that on having captured Yudhishthir, he would be able to entice him to play the game of dice again and send him to forests for long years with his brothers.

The news that Acharya Drona had assured Duryodhana that he would capture Yudhishthir alive and then hand him over to him was carried to the Pandavas by the spies. Pandavas were aware of the unparalleled skill of Drona in conducting such operations; therefore, they so arrayed their forces that Yudhishthir was never left unprotected and unguarded. On the 11th day of battle, which was the first day under Drona's command, Pandava forces suffered severe setbacks. Drona was showering arrows like rain, and his rapid movements made the Pandavas feel as if he was present everywhere. Sahadev and Shakuni, both skilled in illusion warfare fought against each other and broke their chariots. Shalya fought against his nephew Nakula, caused extreme harassment, and then smiled in a most provoking manner. Then there was a great battle between Shalya and Bhimasen in which Shalya was defeated and forced to withdraw for the day.

Drona saw Kaurava forces getting demoralized, and in order to lift their morale, he led an attack personally against Yudhishthir. Yudhishthir answered by shooting many barbed arrows, but Drona kept on advancing at a tremendous speed. With his shaft, Drona cut down Yudhishthir's bow. Dhrishtadhyumna tried to prevent Drona but did not succeed. Drona reached so near that Pandava forces started shouting, "Yudhishthir has been taken". Suddenly Arjun appeared on the scene, driving his chariot from over the heaps of bodies. From his Gandiva, Arjun shot innumerable arrows in quick succession, giving no opportunity to the preceptor to counter the attack. Drona retreated; consequently, Yudhishthir could not be taken a prisoner that day. It was sunset; the battle stopped. Kuru forces went back to their camps in a pensive mood. Pandava forces walked back to their tents with a sense of pride; behind them walked Krishna and Arjun.

Next day Drona discussed the war strategy with Duryodhana saying that they could not succeed in capturing Yudhishthir so long as Arjun was around. Therefore, some strategy had to be devised to take Arjun far away. When Arjun is not around, at that time, Dronacharya could capture Yudhishthir alive and hand him over to Duryodhana. Trigartas extended their support to Kurus in this. They said that they would fight against Arjun, take him far away. Trigartas also took an oath that they would not come back till they slay Arjun and would fight till death. Arjun sought permission from Yudhishthir to go and fight against Trigartas, who had taken a pledge to fight against him till their death. Yudhishthir reminded Arjun that two matchless warriors - Duryodhana and Drona had pledged to capture him alive and he should take all decisions by taking that into account. Arjun reassured the king that Drupada and his sons, blessed with exceptional ability, with their vast armies were standing ready to protect him and that he was going to exterminate the *samshaptakas* (warriors who take a vow to either conquer or die). Krishna drove Arjun's chariot, and they encountered a massive force of *samshaptakas* led by Susharma's son; a fierce fight followed after that.

The *samshaptakas* cheered their leader and fought with sublime courage of accepted deaths. Arjun's great bow Gandiva was scattering death amongst the doomed Trigartas. Soon the battleground was littered with severed limbs, headless bodies, and blood scattered all around. When Trigartas had taken Arjun quite far away, Drona with an intention to capture Yudhishthir alive ordered his forces to attack Pandava armies at the point where Yudhishthir stood. Dhrishtadhyumna marched towards Drona's car to launch an offensive. Drona, however, avoided him and drove towards Drupada from the other side. King Drupad and his forces fought very bravely but suffered enormous casualties at the hands of Drona. Drona again charged towards Yudhishthir, but this time Satyajit made a charge on Drona's car, and fierce combat followed. Drona assumed the form of a destroyer and killed many warriors including Satyajit and Vrika - two princes of Panchal. Satyaki and Shikhandin launched a joint attack to push Drona back, but they were all repulsed, and Drona now felt that Yudhishthir was almost within his reach.

Duryodhana at that time felt delighted and shared his thoughts with Karna saying that after seeing the prowess of Drona that day, Pandavas would not be inclined any more towards the battle. Karna, however, advised Duryodhana not to be over-confident. He at that time reminded Duryodhana that he had given enough troubles to Pandavas throughout their lives and that it was unlikely that they would surrender. Karna reminded that Duryodhana had even tried to kill them through poisoning; he had also tried to burn them alive in a wax palace. He had humiliated them at the game of dice and forced them to live like beggars in the forest. Now, they were not getting back their share of the kingdom, and, therefore,

they would never surrender. Soon the Pandava forces reassembled with a fiery mood. Bhima, Satyaki, Nakul, Drupad, Virat, and Shikhandin all came to protect Yudhishthir. They were all pressing Drona hard from all sides. Karna and Duryodhana proceeded to extend support to Drona. Drona made several attempts to capture Yudhishthir but failed.

Duryodhana led a large elephant division against Bhima, but he defended himself skillfully by shooting sharp arrows from his chariot. Duryodhana's forces, including the king of Angadesh, attacked Bhima but frightened of Bhima's arrows the elephants stampeded and trampled thousands of Kuru soldiers under their feet. Seeing the Kuru forces getting defeated and demoralized, the brave Bhagadatta, king of Pragjyotishapur mounted his gigantic and mighty elephant Supratika and charged against Bhimasen. The powerful beast soon crushed Bhima's chariot and killed its horses. Bhima had escaped by jumping off in time, but he knew a lot about the elephants. Therefore he got below the fierce elephant and showered blows on his vital points until the mighty beast got mad. Bhima then stuck himself between its limbs, causing extreme pain to the most powerful elephant of renown. For some time, Bhima could not be seen by anyone in the Pandava forces, and they started wondering if Bhagadatta's elephant had killed Bhima!

Yudhishthir heard the cry and asked his forces to go and crush Bhagadatta. The king of Pragjyotisha (in Assam region) was attacked on all sides by Pandava forces. A great battle ensued between Bhagadatta's elephant and Dasarna's elephant. At that time Bhima emerged from below Supratika and ran out safe. Pandava armies gave out loud shouts of joy when they saw Bhima alive. Warriors fighting on behalf of the Pandava forces attacked Bhagadatta from all sides; he, however, was not afraid. Sitting on his mighty elephant, he looked resplendent and brave. He drove his beast on Satyaki's chariot, which got smashed. Satyaki saved his life by jumping off in time. The great beast trampled many chariots, horses, and foot soldiers. Bhimasena equipping himself with a new chariot attacked Bhagadatta. A great cloud of dust rose from the field. Arjun saw from a distance and feared that things might have been going wrong in the main battlefield and asked Shri Krishna to drive the chariot in that direction. Susharma and Trigartas came behind him, forcing Arjun to engage in a fight. Susharma hurled a spear at Arjun from behind. Arjun shot three well-aimed arrows which forced Susharma to turn back. Arjun's car quickly reached the battleground where Bhagadatta was harassing the Pandava forces.

Bhagadatta showered arrows at Lord Krishna and Arjun, but Arjun's arrows broke the elephant's armour at vital points and started hurting the beast. Arjun then warned Bhagadatta to have a last look at the world around. After that, he shot sharp arrows from his Gandiva which broke Bhagadatta's bow, shattered his

quiver, and pierced the joints of his armour. Bhagadatta tried to persuade his mighty elephant to move, but it did not budge. Soon it sunk, driving its tusks into the earth and fell dead. Suddenly, Arjun shot a sharp crescent-shaped arrow. It pierced the chest of Bhagadatta, and he fell dead like a great tree falling in a storm. A large variety of weapons were used during the Mahabharat war. Some of these have been listed in Box - 6. The Kaurava forces felt disheartened whereas the Pandava forces were now elated as well as inspired. They jointly attacked Drona's army and wrought great havoc till the sunset. When the sun went below the horizon, Drona gave orders to stop fighting on the 12th day of the war. Kaurava forces retired to their camps feeling dejected and disheartened whereas Pandava forces withdrew to the camps in high spirits and praised Arjun's bravery by gathering around campfires.

Box - 6

The weapons used during the Mahabharat war were of many kinds like-

1. astras (projectiles and missiles); 2 shastra (choppers, cutters, swords, axes, spears, and so on); 3. Dandayudha (strikers, e.g. Gada (mace), musala) 4. yantrayudha (mechanical and firearms like sataghni, bhusundi, etc.); 5. pasha (binding nets, ropes).

***Among astras**, along with bow (Dhanush), the Mahabharat mentions many types of arrows, viz., ksura, narachas, vipathas (Adi Parva 130.6-7), nalikas, karnis, vastikas and so on; these included bone-made arrows (Drona Parva 189.11.2).*

The most sophisticated and devastating missiles were called divyastras (extraordinary weapons); which were activated by mantra (secret wisdom) power. Divyastras mentioned in the Mahabharat include:

aindrastra,	*brahmashirastra,*	*varunastra,*
agneyastra,	*vayuvyastra,*	*parjanyastra,*
bhaumastra,	*parvatastra,*	*gandharvastra,*
tvastastra,	*sammohanastra,*	*prasvanastra,*
pasupatastra,	*antardhanastra,*	*brahmastra,*
narayanastra,	*narayanastra,*	*brahmastra*

(References from - Adi Parva chapters - 96, 102, 123, 125,132, 134, 155 169; Vana Parva - 40, 170, 173; Virata Parva - 58, 61, 63, 66; Udyoga Parva – 183, 184; Drona Parva 29-30, 44(5), 78, 83, 101, 103, 108, 121, 131, 146, 156, 166, 170 (1), 196, 199, 201, 202, and Sauptika Parva 13). There are some more astras mentioned in - Bhisma Parva – chapters 55, 59,73, 77-8, 81-2, 85, 97-8, 101-2, and Karna Parva - 37, 53, 64, 66, 90:

vaisnavastra,	*pramohanastra,*	*bhaskarastra,*
prajnastra,	*jyotirmayastra,*	*adityastra,*
manavastra,	*sarvastraghatakastra,*	*vajrastra,*
nagastra,	*garudastra,*	*atharvanastra,*

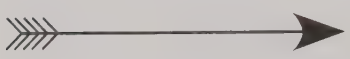
The effects of the weapons listed above were varied: while Sammohanastra or Prasvapanastra would bring sleep or unconsciousness to the enemy, prajnastra awakened him. Jyotirmayastra removed darkness. Brahmastra and Pashupatastra could bring catastrophe, and Narayanastra would cause total destruction.

Chakra (spin wheel) was a kind of a mechanical weapon used as a projectile. Shri Krishna's Sudarshan Chakra was infallible. The mechanical weapons like bhusundi and sataghni (killer of hundreds) were also called nalikastras. Weapons like shakti, trishula, bhindipala, parigha, and pattisa fulfilled different needs and choice.

The Mahabharat mentions maces (generally made of copper) and a special iron mace owned by Bhima. Lord Krishna used Mace Kaumodki. The Epic also makes references to Musals, Nagapashas and other pashas. Mahabharat also describes methods of operation of these weapons.

(Reference: Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume VI, Page no. 360, Publisher - India Heritage Research Foundation, in association with Rupa & co.)

Chapter 34



On the thirteenth day of the war, Kuru forces throwing all ethics and rules of warfare away killed valiant Abhimanyu

Early next day, which was the 13th day of the war, Duryodhana went to Drona and complained with anguish as well as anger that Drona was certainly not doing his best to win the war for the Kurus. He then added that a day before he was in a position to capture Yudhishthir, but he did not do so. Anguished Duryodhana at that time also said that he was unable to understand the reasons for not taking Yudhishthir as a prisoner. Dronacharya felt hurt with this insulting insinuation. He then admonished Duryodhana, saying that the preceptor was doing his best and fighting with great agility and skill against the Pandavas. When he was about to capture Yudhishthir, Arjun reached there. It was just not possible to capture Yudhishthir in the presence of Arjun. Preceptor Drona further added that if they could somehow manage to get Arjun away from the battlefield, then it might become possible to seize Yudhishthir alive.

In the morning of the 13th day, *samshaptakas* had again challenged Arjun to battle. He went to slay them towards the south of the battlefield. An incredibly fierce battle was fought between the two sides. When fighting against the *samshaptakas* Arjun had gone quite far, Drona arranged the army in *chakravyuha* that is a circular formation, which he said was impregnable. At the head of the circular array, Dronacharya had stationed all the warriors of great prowess, including

Duryodhana, Dushasan, Kripa, Karna, Ashwatthama and Jayadratha of Sindhu. They all launched a fierce attack against Yudhishthir. At that time Bhima, Satyaki, Dhrishtadhyumna, Drupada, Shikhandin, Virat, and Chekitana (son of Suryavanshi king Dhrishtaketu) offered powerful resistance on behalf of Pandavas. They all appeared to be ineffective against Drona's offensive, as they did not know how to penetrate that *chakravyuha* formation.

Yudhishthir enquired from young and valiant prince Abhimanyu if he knew how to penetrate that formation. Abhimanyu replied that he knew to force his way inside, but if entrapped, he did not know how to come out. Yudhishthir then asked the brave young man to penetrate the formation, and all the brave heroes would follow immediately behind. Bhima assured him that he would enter just behind him. Impelled by his own gallant nature and thinking of achieving the objectives of his father Arjun and uncle Krishna, Abhimanyu decided to impregnate the chakravyuha formation. Abhimanyu asked his charioteer to drive his chariot fast towards Dronacharya. The Kaurava warriors got worried as they saw Abhimanyu's chariot approaching them because unbreakable chakravyuha, formation had been breached. Abhimanyu had just entered the circular formation; Kuru forces quickly closed the breach under the guidance of Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu-Sauvira. None of the Pandava warriors could enter the chakravyuha formation after Abhimanyu. Inside Chakravyuha Abhimanyu was left alone. Kaurava warriors pounced upon Abhimanyu, but he fought very bravely and killed hundreds of warriors with his sharp-edged arrows. He caused such havoc with his skill and agility that Kauravas were reminded of Arjun's prowess.

Looking at the large-scale destruction caused by Abhimanyu, Duryodhana was furious and came personally to fight against him. Drona sent mighty heroes to support and protect Duryodhana. Abhimanyu was hoping to kill Duryodhana, but the other Kuru warriors took him away to some distance. Duryodhana, however, was fuming, and he sent a large number of warriors to launch an unparalleled offensive against Abhimanyu. Instead of having any admiration for his nephew, whom he had seen for the first time fighting so brilliantly, he was burning with even greater jealousy. Drona, Kripa, Karna, Dushasana, Shalya, and Shakuni all launched a combined offensive against Abhimanyu and showered arrows on him from all sides. Arjun's son, however, pierced their shafts with his sharp and well-aimed arrows. At that time Dushasana pierced Abhimanyu's body with 10 arrows, Kripa with three and Drona himself pierced Abhimanyu's body with 17 poisonous arrows. Even then, valiant Abhimanyu managed to kill king Ashmak and severely wounded Karna. Displaying his skill, Abhimanyu at that time tore the armour of Shalya and shot him on vital parts.

After that Kuru army went berserk; thousands of warriors from all sides: some on chariots, some on horses, and some on foot, wielding all kinds of weapons including shafts, maces, lances, swords attacked Abhimanyu. The brave young boy, without displaying any fear, shot non-stop arrows in all directions and killed hundreds of warriors single-handed. Hearing about these deeds of bravery on the part of Arjun's son, Dhritarashtra's heart was filled with shame as well as with delight. Dronacharya, on the other hand, at that time, shared his thoughts about the prowess of Abhimanyu with Kripa saying he had not seen any other warrior possessing superior ability and skill. Duryodhana heard these words and always full of apprehensions, he told Karna and Dushasana that the preceptor Drona would not kill Arjun's son as he was busy admiring his bravery.

Dushasana heard Duryodhana's words, roared in anger and then announced that the son of Arjun would lose his life in a few minutes. He took the chariot towards Abhimanyu and showered poisonous sharp arrows. Using defensive-cum-offensive strategy, Abhimanyu shot arrows without giving any break whatsoever. The chariots of Abhimanyu and Dushasana made intriguing movements against each other and fiery battle raged for a long time. Finally, Abhimanyu's arrow struck Dushasana senseless in his car; his charioteer managed to take him away from the battlefield. Furious Karna now attacked Abhimanyu with his mighty shafts. Abhimanyu managed to break Karna's bow and his charioteer also carried him to safety. This brave son of Arjun has been named as Veer Abhimanyu by many poets and authors. He was taking on alone against thousands of Kuru warriors of enormous strength at that time. There is a need to know the reasons why other Pandava heroes did not/could not enter the circular formation to launch the offensive in support of Abhimanyu.

After Abhimanyu decided to impregnate the chakravyuha, not knowing how to come out of it, all the Pandava heroes, including Bhima, Yudhishthir, Nakul, Sahadev, Drupad, Dhrishtadhyumna, along with their mighty forces, followed him closely so that they could break into the circular formation following Abhimanyu as per the plan. However, the heroic king of Sindhu-Sauvira named Jayadratha, who was also Dhritarashtra's son-in-law, swooped down upon the Pandavas with his mighty forces. He attacked Pandavas with such swiftness and such intensity that they found it impossible to break into the chakravyuha formation following Abhimanyu. With great dexterity and skill, Jayadratha and his forces ensured that the breach created in chakravyuha with Abhimanyu's entry got quickly and effectively closed. Pandavas made several attempts but could not find their way to enter the circular formation.

Yudhishthir hurled javelin and cut Jayadratha's bow, but within a minute Jayadratha took another bow and shot sharp arrows at Yudhishthir. Bhimasena after that shot many deadly arrows at Saindhava; he succeeded in cutting off and felling the canopy and flag of Saindhava King, and he also broke his bow. Saindhava King quickly replaced it with another one but did not let any of the Pandavas enter the chakravyuha. Jayadratha finally succeeded in killing the horses of Bhima's chariot; he had to jump into Satyaki's chariot quickly. The warriors of the Pandava army thereafter tried to enter the formation following the track of numerous slain warriors and horses, left behind by Abhimanyu while entering the chakravyuha. However, the forces led by King Jayadratha of Sindhu-Sauvira effectively blocked even that route. In this manner with his stubborn heroism, Jayadratha prevented the Pandavas from following Abhimanyu inside that deadly and tricky battle formation. The young son of Arjun and Subhadra was thus completely isolated and was surrounded by wily Kuru forces from all sides.

Abhimanyu displayed exceptional courage and fought with unparalleled prowess. After the defeat of Dushasana and Karna, Kuru forces had got demoralized and started fleeing in all directions. Duryodhana's rage knew no bounds at that time; he ordered all his troops to attack that brave son of Subhadra and Arjun. Duryodhana's own brave son named Lakshman, endued with energy and pride came forward to attack Abhimanyu at that time. Then quickly Duryodhana, Kripa, Brihadbala followed him. He shot some well-aimed arrows at Abhimanyu, hurting him on the chest. Then Subhadra's son took a broad-headed shaft, shot it at Lakshman and cut-off his head. Inflamed with rage, Duryodhana ordered all his warriors to adopt whatever means to slay Abhimanyu. Drona, Ashwatthama, Kripa, Karna, Brihadbala, Kritavarman showered deadly, sharp, poisonous arrows on Abhimanyu from all sides and he was bravely beating back or cutting those arrows. Abhimanyu succeeded in killing Brihadbala, and in severely wounding Karna and Ashwatthama.

Drona at that time shouted that it was impossible to kill Abhimanyu and it was also impossible to pierce his armour. Therefore, attempts should be made to cut the reins of his horses and then attack him from behind. Karna broke the bow of Abhimanyu's son by discharging a shaft from behind. Then Kritavarman slew horses of Abhimanyu's chariot and broke his chariot. Facing shower of arrows from all sides, Abhimanyu now fought bravely with a sword in hand. Drona at that time cut off Abhimanyu's sword with an arrow. Deprived of his chariot, bow and sword, Abhimanyu at that time took out one wheel of his chariot and whirled it around like discus. The dust from his car wheel covered him, but the brave young hero was whirling around the wheel facing all his enemies. He fought fiercely; however, finally, the combined might of warriors overpowered him. The chariot

wheel, being whirled around by him, was shattered into pieces and Abhimanyu started struggling to stay on his feet. Dushasana's son came, attacked him with a mace, and Abhimanyu fell down dead.

Instead of feeling ashamed of fighting against one brave, young fighter, Drona's vast armies started dancing around the dead body of Abhimanyu like savage hunters. There were cries of victory and blowing of conches all over the Kaurava army. Yuyustu, son of Dhritarashtra, at that time shouted that even soldiers had forgotten the moral code of conduct. Instead of feeling ashamed, they were celebrating their most wicked deed. Kuru warriors did not like his words, but he was a good man who had the guts to speak out his mind. In their heart of hearts, most of the sensible people were at that time saying that all rules and ethics regulating wars in those days were violated for murdering that brave young son of Arjun and that the warriors should hang their heads in shame.

On learning how Abhimanyu had been killed by the combined might of thousands of warriors of Kuru forces in the battle, Yudhishthir plunged into fathomless sorrow. He lamented that the young warrior, who could defeat even Drona, Duryodhana, Dushasana, and Karna in battle, was dead. He repeatedly talked about the futility of continuing the war for obtaining the kingdom after losing Arjun and Subhadra's brave young son. He repented that it was extremely foolish on his part to persuade young son of Arjun to penetrate the Chakravyuha formed by invincible Dronacharya. He started lamenting that he considered himself to be the murderer of brave Abhimanyu. Thus, Yudhishthir was mourning surrounded by warriors who were all thinking about the valour and then the untimely demise of valiant Abhimanyu.

Yudhishthir was inconsolable when Sage Vyas came there to provide some comfort in that hour of great sorrow. Vyas proceeded to console bereaved Dharamaputra, saying that death is the most certain thing in the world. He then told that initially when Brahma created the living beings, they kept on multiplying and filled the earth to the brim. After that, Brahma and Lord Shiva created the rule that all mortals, who are born must die. This death comes due to several reasons – sickness, age, accident, or war. Death was, therefore, inescapable law of nature and was ultimately for the good of the world. It was, therefore, not wise to experience limitless grief at someone's death. Sage Vyas further added that there was no reason to pity those who die; however, one could have reason to grieve for those who are left behind. The Sage then added that Kshatriya who dies fighting war for a just cause achieves the highest heavens.

Late in the evening, after killing thousands of *Samshaptakas*, who had taken a vow to fight till the end, Arjun was returning to his camp sitting in a chariot driven

by Madhav. At that time he shared his melancholy thoughts with Shri Krishna saying that some tragedy seems to have taken place in the Pandava camp. Then as they approached the Pandava camp, Arjun's premonition of a calamity increased. He did not hear the sounds of soothing music, the soldiers were not extending a warm welcome from a distance, and Abhimanyu did not come out running to greet him. With such apprehensions, Arjun entered the camp and saw everybody looking sad with heads hanging down. When Arjun did not see his valiant son Abhimanyu, he said that he had heard that Drona had arrayed his army in chakravyuha. None among the Pandavas knew how to pierce that formation. He enquired if Abhimanyu forced his way into that formation, then he must be dead as he had only taught him how to force his way into the Chakravyuha Formation but had not as yet taught him how to come out of it. In response, nobody spoke; their downcast eyes, their mournful silence confirmed the worst fears of the bereaved father, and he burst into heart-rending lamentation.

Arjun thereafter bewailed that his most accomplished valiant son had become Yama's guest. How could Yudhishthir, Bhima, Nakul, Sahadev, Satyaki, and Dhrishtadhyumna allow the son of Subhadra to be slain by the enemies? How would Arjun meet Subhadra and what solace he would offer to her? Arjun's heart went out to Uttara, daughter of King Virat and young bride of Abhimanyu. He was at a loss to imagine how she would be able to bear that permanent separation after having remained married for less than two months.

Krishna Vasudeva uttered words of solace to pacify Arjun. He reminded him that Abhimanyu was born in the Kshatriya race, and death is ever the companion of someone who lives and dies by weapons. When a Kshatriya gives up life, fighting the war for justice and righteousness, he attains the highest heavens. Krishna further added that if Arjun gave way to such uncontrollable grief, then his brothers would become melancholy and demoralized. Therefore, the need of the hour was that Arjun should wear this most tragic event of his life with fortitude. Dhananjaya then wanted to know the details of sequential events which resulted in the death of his brave son.

Yudhishthir after that, narrated the entire sequence of events, blaming himself for asking the brave young man to enter the enemy formation. He further explained that he had made full arrangements intending that a large army, led by mighty warriors like Bhima and Satyaki, would follow him from behind. The brave young Abhimanyu made his way and entered the circular formation; when the Pandava warriors were trying to enter just behind him, wicked Jayadratha intervened and effectively stopped them from entering the chakravyuha. His forces fought against Pandavas with extraordinary prowess, and with immense proficiency, they closed

the breach in chakravyuha before any Pandava warriors could enter. All efforts of Pandavas to enter that formation met with such stiff resistance that Pandavas could not enter the *chakravyuha*. Yudhishthir after that narrated in detail the exceptional bravery with which Abhimanyu fought when shamelessly throwing all rules and ethics of war to winds, those Kuru warriors, including Drona, Duryodhana, Karna, Kripa, Dushasana, Ashwatthama launched a combined attack on him from all sides. After suffering initial setbacks at Abhimanyu's hands, they finally succeeded in slaying the young hero by attacking with various kinds of weapons when he was rendered weaponless. Yudhishthir concluded that he believed that Jayadratha, king of Sindhu-Sauvira, was to be blamed for the untimely slaughter of fearless and brave Abhimanyu.

CHAPTER 35

Arjun took a vow to kill Jayadratha before the sunset on the fourteenth day of the war

For some time, Arjun was overpowered entirely with grief. His eyes were overflowing with tears. He lamented that all his brothers were sitting on their chariots and were shooting arrows; still, they could not save his son. Lord Krishna then consoled Arjun saying that brave Abhimanyu has attained the highest heavens and that Arjun should compose himself to console his brothers. When Arjun recovered, he took an oath that before the sunset the next day, he would slay Jayadratha to avenge his son's death. If Drona and Kripa come in between, they would also be slain. The news of Arjun's oath reached the enemy through the spies. Jayadratha was the son of Vriddhakshatra, the well-known king of Sindhu-Sauvira. At the time of the birth of Jayadratha, a voice was heard announcing that the prince would be a great warrior and would attain a great glory but a warrior of the enormous prowess would severe his head from his body. Vriddhakshatra was pained to hear that; he indulged in severe penances in Kurukshetra region, and then he uttered a curse that whoever would cause his son's head to roll down on earth shall have his head burst into many fragments. When Jayadratha grew up, his father left the kingdom to his care and withdrew to Kurukshetra region to practice austerities.

After hearing about Arjun's oath, Jayadratha wanted to withdraw from the war and go back to his kingdom. Duryodhana, however, persuaded him to stay back

and fight the war as on the next day all the great warriors of Kuru forces would be deployed only to protect Jayadratha. He assured Jayadratha that there was absolutely no chance that Arjun could even come near him; therefore, there was no chance of his getting killed. Jayadratha then sought Drona's opinion about the comparative might of Arjun and himself. Drona gave a very diplomatic reply saying that both he and Arjun were imparted similar training, but Arjun has been more disciplined. However, Jayadratha need not be afraid as he the entire Kuru force would fight on his behalf.

Krishna at that time told Arjun that he had been rash in taking the vow of killing Jayadratha the very next day and that he did not take into account the prowess of Kuru forces, the agility of Karna, and the skill of Drona. Arjun, however, reiterated that he would surely slay Jayadratha, who had also tried to abduct Draupadi from Dvaitavana, by the next day evening. He requested Shri Krishna to have his chariot ready by next morning fully equipped with all implements of war. Throughout the night, both Partha and Krishna were afflicted with anguish, anger, and grief; they did not have a wink of sleep. Then Arjun requested Madhava to go and console his sister Subhadra, who had lost her grown up, brave and accomplished son and also offer consolation to princess Uttara, who had been widowed within two months of her marriage.

Shri Krishna went to Subhadra and found her overtaken by grief, sobbing and crying. He then told her that she was the mother of a great warrior, wife of a great hero, the daughter of a very brave man and sister of two unparalleled warriors. She, therefore, should not mourn the loss of her son, who was a mighty car-warrior and had slain many of his wicked enemies during war. He had, thus, attained the highest heavens by giving up his life, while performing the duties of a Kshatriya. Afflicted with grief, Subhadra at that time broke down and started wailing remembering the untimely demise of his beloved and handsome son. She expressed anguish that strength of Bhima, prowess of Yudhishthir, combined might of Drupads, Matsyas, and Chedis could not defend her son. She expressed disgust that Arjun, wielder of Gandiva and Shri Krishna, wielder of Sudarshan Chakra failed to save the life of her only son!

After that, Subhadra started praying that the departed soul of Abhimanyu may attain the highest heavens. Grief-stricken Draupadi and desolate Kunti, on the other hand, were trying to console Uttara, who had been widowed at such a young age. After that, lamenting and bewailing under the weight of their grief, all four of them fell down almost senseless. Shri Krishna at that time consoled four of them saying many words of wisdom and reassurance. After that, he came back to Arjun's camp. Lord Krishna then took water and lied down on bed contemplating how to

fulfil his dearest friend Arjun's vow of killing Jayadratha the very next day. Shri Krishna called his charioteer Daruka and shared with him his determination that Arjun was most dear to him and he would do anything to help him fulfil his vow of killing Jayadratha the very next day. Janardan asked Daruka to fully equip his chariot according to the rules of Military science and follow him carefully, and if he heard him blowing Panchajanya, he would quickly bring his chariot to him.

Arjun could not get a wink of sleep, but reciting some Mantras, he soon got some sleep, and then Govinda in his Vishnu *Swarupam* appeared in his dream. The Lord asked him to shed his grief, perform his duty and reminded him of Pashupata weapon, which he could use to slay Jayadratha. Arjun after that also got the blessings of Lord Shiva in his dream. Shri Krishna, on the other hand, could get some sleep in the last part of the night and in the morning he came and sat with Yudhishthir. Dharamaputra at that time was worried about the oath taken by Arjun to kill Jayadratha that day by sunset and that the very survival of Pandavas depended upon the fulfilment of that vow. He sought Shri Krishna's protection and support. Shri Krishna admired Arjun's bowman-ship and prowess and assured Yudhishthir that Arjun would not only slay Jayadratha but would defeat all other enemies and would annihilate the Kuru forces.

When Govinda and Dharamaputra were thus talking, Arjun entered their chamber and narrated the details of his dream to them. Yudhishthir embraced him affectionately and showered blessings on him. Then without losing much time, Arjun mounted his chariot. Janardan and valiant Yuyudhan *alias* Satyaki also mounted that chariot. Arjun requested Yuyudhan to take charge of the protection of king Yudhishthir whereas he, along with Janardan, would go to slay Jayadratha.

Drona, on the other hand, had arrayed his forces that day in such a manner so that Saindhava King Jayadratha got fully protected from all sides and no one could reach him from any side. At least 12 miles behind the main forces Jayadratha and his detachment were placed in an extremely secure position. Karna, Ashwatthama, Shalya, Bhurishrava, Kripa and many other great warriors with their mighty forces were deployed to protect Saindhava king from all sides. Between them and Pandava forces, Dronacharya arrayed the main Kaurava forces, partly in a Sakata and partly in a Circular formation. Drona stood at the head of the circular army, which was occupying full 20 miles area, with numerous brave kings and warriors stationed with their mighty forces. In the back portion of that formation was formed another lotus-shaped impenetrable array, within which was formed needle-shaped arrangement. In the rear of this needle-shaped array was placed Kritavarman of great might. Duryodhana beheld that grand

array figuring a Sakata, teeming with warriors and weapons, chariots and horses, and became filled with delight.

With a large force spread across the battleground of Kurukshetra, looking like an unconquerable battle formation, Duryodhana's brother Durmarshan blew the conch and challenged Arjun. Arjun blew his own conch and charged at Durmarshan and his forces. Inflamed with rage Dhananjya was unstoppable. Like a tempest tearing a mass of cloud, Arjun routed Kuru army. Afflicted in this manner, the cavalry, the infantry, the car-warriors, fled in haste from the battlefield. Arjun vanquished Durmarshan in no time. Red with anger and leading a large force of elephants, Dushasana attacked Arjun. Savyasachi then started slaughtering the enemy forces. Deeply pierced with Narachas and vomiting blood, elephants with their riders fell down dead on the ground. Dhananjaya fought fiercely, and the entire field was strewn with bodies of warriors and elephants.

After the slaughter of his division, Dushasana withdrew, and Arjun's chariot proceeded ahead and approached Drona. Arjun addressed Drona and sought his blessings to avenge the killing of his son Abhimanyu by slaying Jayadratha. Dronacharya, however, replied that before attempting to reach Jayadratha, Arjun had to fight with the preceptor and discharged a shower of arrows on Arjun's car. Arjun also showered arrows in return, but the preceptor parried these very easily and then shot flaming shafts at both Arjun and Shri Krishna. Dhananjaya thought that he would cut Drona's bow. Just as he was pulling the string of his bow, Drona's arrow came and cut the string of Arjun's bow. Giving out an enigmatic smile, Acharya at that time rained sharp arrows at Arjun, at his chariot and his horses. It looked as if Drona-cloud with its downpour of arrows had covered the Arjun-sun, whose rays in the form of effulgent arrows were burning down the Kuru forces. At that point, Arjun protected himself by making use of Brahma weapon.

Shri Krishna got worried thinking that Dronacharya knew no fatigue and he would engage Arjun till evening. On the other hand, Arjun had vowed to kill Jayadratha by the evening of that very day. Janardan then suggested that bypassing Drona; they should proceed towards Jayadratha. Krishna drove Arjun's chariot to the left of Drona and moved forward. Drona warned them to stop as they could not proceed further without defeating their enemy. Arjun gave a very diplomatic reply saying that Drona was not his enemy but was his preceptor. Arjun also added that Drona was like his father and that no one in this world could defeat Drona. Almost disarming Drona with his words, Arjun proceeded forward at a swift pace bypassing Drona.

Arjun then punctured King Bhoja's army. The King, as well as the Prince of Kamboja, were defeated and killed by Dhananjaya. Thousands of Kaurava

warriors then attacked Arjun from all sides. Single-handed Arjun severed the heads of thousands of warriors and killed many others. However, Shrutayusha attacked Arjun in a very violent manner. After displaying an unparalleled prowess and bravery, Shrutayusha got killed with his own mace which had bounced back on him after hitting the armour of Shri Krishna's chest. At that time Surasenas, Shibis and Vasatis, along with their forces, launched a brutal attack against Arjun. Dhananjay with sharp arrows shot from his Gandiva, cut down the heads and arms of thousands of those warriors. Ashrutayusha then created havoc with his arrows; he wounded Arjun and covered his chariot with projectiles just as clouds cover the sun during rainfall. Shri Krishna said some encouraging and inspiring words to Partha so that he could resume the ferocious fight to fulfil his vow of killing Jayadratha by evening. Arjun succeeded in cutting down the heads and arms of Ashrutayusha, and he fell dead in the battlefield. As a result, the blood was flowing in that battleground with mangled, disfigured, and slashed parts of bodies of slain heroes, creating a most horrifying scene. Arjun marched on, killing many more warriors of Kuru forces, and successfully made his way to Jayadratha.

Duryodhana was greatly agitated when he saw Partha's chariot proceeding victoriously towards Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu-Sauvira, who was also the husband of Duryodhana's sister Subala. Anguished, as well as angry with Drona, rushed towards him, and complained very bitterly saying that Arjun had succeeded in effecting a breach in the vast array of army conceptualized and led by Drona himself! He had succeeded in advancing to Jayadratha's position and seeing this, Kaurava warriors were bound to feel confused and disheartened. They had all through believed that Arjun would never be able to breach the Chakravyuha-cum-Sakata battle array formed and led by Drona, but all their beliefs had proved wrong. Duryodhana enquired with Drona as to how Arjun could advance towards Saindhav King Jayadratha before his very eyes and why the preceptor could not do anything. He also asked Drona, why was he letting him down. Duryodhana added that, had he known Drona would behave in this manner, he would not have requested Jayadratha to stay back. Duryodhana expressed his apprehension that if Arjun attacked Jayadratha, it would not be possible for him to escape death. Then Duryodhana beseeched Drona to go personally and save Jayadratha from the infallible arrows of Arjun.

Though feeling offended, Drona appreciated the situation and gave a controlled response to Duryodhana, saying that king Duryodhana was like his own son and was very dear to him. Instead, Drona added that Yudhishthir was in the Pandava armies, unsupported by Arjun. This situation had offered an excellent opportunity for which they had been waiting, ever since Drona had taken over as the supreme

commander of the Kuru forces. Drona said that he was very keen to capture Yudhishthir alive and then deliver him to Duryodhana. This plan was about to bear fruit; Drona believed that he would be able to take Yudhishthir as a prisoner. Drona, therefore, suggested to Duryodhana that he should take the coat of armour provided by him, don it and then go and stop Arjun personally. Drona also added that his presence in the circular array was vital and that if he left to go after Arjun, the battle array would be hopelessly broken. There would be chances that Kuru forces lose the battle to advancing Pandava forces. Dronacharya assured Duryodhana that the armour provided by him would protect him, and with his ability and skill, Duryodhana would indeed be victorious.

Duryodhana felt reassured, and his confidence got restored. He wore the special armour, stacked his chariot with all kinds of effulgent weapons; followed by a large force, he went to attack Arjun. Arjun, on the other hand, had crossed that entire Kuru army and had reached where Jayadratha had been stationed for safety. Seeing that the horses of Arjun's chariot were fatigued, Krishna stopped the chariot to unyoke the tired and thirsty horses. Suddenly Vinda and Anuvinda, heroic kings of Avanti, along with their forces, attacked from behind. Arjun, however, displayed great prowess and skill; he defeated their forces and succeeded in killing both of them. After that, Shri Krishna unyoked the horses, let them rest for some time. After the horses were well-fed and fresh again, they were yoked, and the chariot proceeded ahead.

Suddenly, Shri Krishna saw Duryodhana coming from behind ready to pounce on the Pandava hero, accompanied by a large Army. Janardan told Dhananjaya that by good luck the time for taking revenge had come as the man who had been continuously causing immense grief to Pandavas had arrived to deliver himself into the hands of Arjun. Shri Krishna reminded Arjun to remember that Duryodhana was a great archer, a strong limbed fighter and a committed warrior. After thus advising Arjun, Govinda halted the chariot and Duryodhana approached without any fear and challenged Arjun to display his prowess. Duryodhana rained sharp arrows on Arjun. Arjun made them ineffective and also showered effulgent arrows on Duryodhana. Shri Krishna was surprised to see that Arjun's arrows were not hurting Duryodhana; these arrows struck Duryodhana, but after touching his armour, these failed to pierce him and then dropped to the ground. Shri Krishna then teased Arjun wondering if Arjun's arms had lost their strength or Arjun's Bow Gandiva had lost its precision and effectiveness.

Arjun smiled and then responded to Janardan's mock and said that neither his arms had lost their prowess nor there was anything wrong with Gandiva. Actually, Duryodhana had come wearing charmed armour provided by Dronacharya. Arjun

then added that Drona had taught him the secret of that armour and therefore Shri Krishna could enjoy some fun. After responding in this manner, Arjun proceeded to shoot his arrows on Duryodhana. He first killed the horses of Duryodhana's chariot, after that damaged his chariot, and severely wounded his charioteer. Then Arjun shot a sharp arrow and broke Duryodhana's bow and then disarmed him completely. Finally, Arjun started shooting needle-like darts which pierced those parts of Duryodhana's body that were not covered by the armour. Duryodhana felt stinging pain, could do nothing, and when he could withstand that pain no longer, he turned back and fled from the battlefield.

Let us revert to the other front where Drona was making a strategy to capture Yudhishthir alive and hand him over to Duryodhana. The troops of Pandavas commanded by Dhrishtadhyumna covered the division of Drona with a shower of sharp arrows. Drona and his warriors retaliated with equal might. A ferocious fight followed. Pandava forces were using all their strength to defeat Drona that day. That preceptor, however, was able to stop the arrows shot by Pandavas, Panchals, and Kekayas like a mountain checking the flow of water. Then Dhrishtadhyumna proceeded like a thick cloud; having swords, darts, and lances for the winds; bowstrings for its lightening; twang of the bow for its rumbling. Killing all around Kuru forces with a variety of sharp weapons, Dhrishtadhyumna seemed to deluge the earth with the blood of the dead soldiers. It appeared as if Death itself devoured the warriors, stupefied by the mighty Dhrishtadhyumna.

The Kuru warriors, however, stood their ground and did not run away from the battlefield. The sharp arrows of Guru Drona were also slaughtering innumerable Pandava warriors. The two princes of Avanti, Vinda and Anuvinda then fought against the king of Virat and wounded him with their sharp arrows. The king of Balhika, accompanied by thousands of warriors, then launched a vicious attack on Shikhandin, son of King Drupad. Both of them fought ferociously and wounded each other. The king of Balhika at that time also attacked the sons of Draupadi and discharged hundreds of arrows at those five young princes, who were also his great-grandsons. King Shalya fought against Yudhishthir, and he retaliated with full force and anger. A furious fight ensued between Dushasana and Satyaki, a great Vrishni warrior. The twin sons of Madri, Nakul, and Sahadev, inflamed with rage mangled Shakuni with their shafts.

With a sword and a mace in his hands, Dhrishtadhyumna jumped on Drona's car intending to slay him. He got huge applause from his forces, and it appeared that Drona had no opportunity to strike back at him. Drona quickly retaliated by cutting off the sword and shield of Dhrishtadhyumna with his sharp arrows. Drona also slew the horses yoked to the chariot of the son of Drupada. Finally, Drona shot

an arrow which was capable of taking Dhrishtadhyumna's life but Satyaki cut off that fatal arrow with his sharp shafts. Ferocious with anger, Drona then like a poisonous serpent stretched bow like its open mouth and arrows like its fangs and then advanced against Satyaki. Yuyudhan at that time charged back at Drona, and they poured arrows on each other. Both were wounded, both were bleeding, but they continued to fight. All the warriors at that time paused to watch that single combat between Drona and Yuyudhan that is Satyaki. When they discharged Varuna and Agneya weapons, it appeared as if the sun had gone below the horizon for some time.

The Pandava forces were moving ahead determined to kill Drona that day. Showering sharp arrows, the Panchals, supported by other Pandava forces, reached near Drona's chariot. Vikarna, brother of Duryodhana, at that time, assailed Nakula. Durmukha, another brother of Duryodhana, attacked Sahadev. On the other hand, Somadatta, son of King Balhika of Balkh, fought against the sons of Drupad. Yudhishthir shot some sharp arrows at Drona. Drona reacted, cut off the bow of Yudhishthir and shot many darts at his body. Yudhishthir then hurled a lance at Drona, who invoked Brahma weapon. This weapon flew towards Yudhishthir; after burning the lance into ashes, it charged towards Yudhishthir, who saved himself by invoking another Brahma weapon. Furious Drona slew the horses of king Yudhishthir's chariot and he stood defenceless for a short while on the ground. Warriors on both sides thought that Drona and his Kuru forces had captured King Yudhishthir, but he had escaped by mounting the chariot of Sahadev and then fleeing from the field.

In the meantime, Satyaki was slaughtering the Kaurava forces with prowess and with his effulgent arrows. Drona then launched a virulent attack on Satyaki and severely wounded him. Beholding his plight, Yudhishthir asked his forces to rush towards Drona in order to save Yuyudhana (Satyaki). The Panchals, the Srinjayas, the Pandavas launched a joint attack at Drona, but Drona stood in the field like a destroyer incarnate.

Let us now revert to the battle scene, where Arjun after vanquishing Duryodhana was proceeding towards Jayadratha for fulfilling his vow of killing him before the sunset that day. After Duryodhana was wounded and dishonoured by Arjun, Krishna blew his conch Panchajanya sending a streak of fear in Jayadratha's army. The warriors around the Sindhu-Sauvira King were all surprised. They immediately got ready with their chariots, weapons, and armours. Eight mighty warriors, including Bhurishrava, grandson of King Balhika of Balkh; Karna, king of Angadesh; Vrihasena, son of Karna; Kripa, the Preceptor; Shalya, the king of Madra Desh and maternal Uncle of Nakul and

Sahadev; Ashwatthama, son of Guru Drona; and Jayadratha, king of Sindhu-Sauvira, duly supported by their mighty forces arrayed their armies against Arjun. Then those warriors showered sharp shafts wounding both Arjun and Shri Krishna. Inflamed with rage, Arjun mangled his enemies with thousands of shafts. Sanjay at that time expressed his surprise to Dhritarashtra saying that Arjun had struck all his foes with wonder as he single-handed, dauntlessly encountered thousands of warriors with ease.

Yudhishthir was suddenly overpowered with grief and worry. He heard the Kurus roaring rapturously and blowing their conches and could not hear the twang of Gandiva; therefore, he thought that everything was not well with Arjun. He at that time turned towards Satyaki and said that he and Lord Krishna were the two greatest well-wishers of Pandavas and that Yudhishthir was beseeching the great hero to go and save Arjun's life. Satyaki responded that he would have gone immediately to obey the command of king Yudhishthir; however, he remembered what had been commanded by Arjun and Shri Krishna. They had said that the safety of the monarch Yudhishthir was entrusted to him till they come back after slaying Jayadratha. They also added that Drona would make every effort to capture the king, and if he succeeded, it would be like losing the war. Satyaki reassured Yudhishthir saying that Shri Krishna had personally assured Arjun's safety, and therefore he need not worry.

Yudhishthir, however, could not be reassured. He then said that Satyaki's bosom friend and preceptor Arjun's life was in danger. Yudhishthir recollected that very often Arjun used to talk about Satyaki's skill, prowess, and sincerity in most admiring words. Yudhishthir then added that the dust was rising and he was afraid that powerful Saindhava king Jayadratha had surrounded Arjun; his life was in danger, and he needed immediate support from Satyaki. Yudhishthir then directed Satyaki to go and defend Arjun and that he had sufficient forces and many brave warriors to defend him; these included Dhrishtadhyumna, King Virat, Kekayas, Drupad, Shikhandin, and Ghatotkacha. The king at that time also added that the necessity of rendering aid to Dhananjaya was more important than the protection of Yudhishthir at that point.

Satyaki finally conceded and agreed that he would go to assist Arjun and that he knew where he was at that time. Yudhishthir got kept all kinds of powerful weapons in Satyaki's chariot. Accompanied by Bhima under the command of Yudhishthir, invincible Satyaki followed the path leading straight to Arjun. Under orders from Yudhishthir, the mighty Pandava forces followed Satyaki to ensure that Drona did not stop him on the way. Drona and his troops made every possible effort to stop Satyaki by attacking him from all sides. In retaliation, Satyaki shot

such sharp shafts in quick succession that many fierce Kuru bowmen were sent to the abode of Yama. Drona then got furious; he showered innumerable arrows which covered Satyaki together with his chariot, charioteer, and steeds. Satyaki also covered Drona with his arrows and then requested Drona in all humility to let him proceed in the track of Dhananjay.

Having thus addressed Drona, and then avoiding him, Satyaki tried to advance towards Arjun after passing through the breach between the two divisions of Kuru forces. When Satyaki was attempting to do so, Kuru warriors of great prowess attacked him from all sides. Kritavarman, a mighty Yadava chief who had come from Saurashtra for fighting in support of Duryodhana, inflicted severe wounds on Satyaki. However, after wounding Kritavarman's right arm with a lance, Satyaki managed to proceed further. Drona and Kritavarman were determined to stop Satyaki. Therefore, they followed him and attacked from behind. Bhima and other Pandava warriors engaged them in the fight at that time. After that, Bhima, Nakul, Sahadev, and Yudhishthir attacked Kritavarman and pierced him from all sides. Kritavarman was fighting back using all his might. Bhima at that time threw a dreadful lance at Kritavarman, who cut it into two pieces with his arrows. At that time, Shikhandin whirling a mighty sword, hurled it at Kritavarman. Kritavarman launched a fierce counter-attack and wounded Shikhandin so severely that his charioteer drove him away from the battlefield. All the Pandava brothers were severely injured and demoralized.

At that time, Satyaki, appeared like an angel to raise the morale of Pandava forces. Satyaki then caused brutal slaughter amongst the Kuru forces. He succeeded in killing even Jalasandh. At that time Drona, accompanied by king Duryodhana and a large number of other Kaurava warriors, attacked Satyaki. A ferocious fight followed. Duryodhana had severely wounded Satyaki, and blood started oozing out of his wounds. Even then Satyaki succeeded in cutting off the bow of Duryodhana and severely injured him. Satyaki succeeded in slaying the four horses of Duryodhana's chariot. The Kuru king after that fled away from the battlefield using Chitrasena's chariot. Hearing this, Kritavarman quickly reached the place where Satyaki was displaying his unlimited prowess. A fierce encounter followed, they shot sharp arrows at each other, and both were severely wounded. Then Satyaki placed on his bow an arrow, which emitted great effulgence and looked like an enraged snake; that arrow resembling the dart of death, sorely wounded Kritavarman.

Drona then launched a violent attack on Yuyudhan. They wounded each other's charioteers and cut each other's bowstrings. Pierced with the sharp arrows of Drona, Satyaki then succeeded in killing Drona's charioteer. The horses of

Drona's chariot then started dragging him all over the battlefield. The Kuru warriors at that time, leaving Satyaki behind, started proceeding to the spot where Drona's horses were carrying him away. Satyaki heaved a sigh of relief. He then told his charioteer that after having crossed Drona's uncrossable division, it would now be more comfortable to reach where Arjun, accompanied by Janardan, was waiting to kill Jayadratha.

Bhima tried to follow Satyaki but Kauravas led by Drona himself sought to prevent Bhima from going to Arjun's relief. Red with anger, Bhima at that time killed 11 sons of Dhritarashtra one by one. Bhima then approached Dronacharya who shouted that Bhima could not proceed further without defeating him. Bhima was infuriated to hear those words; he answered scornfully that once upon a time Drona was their preceptor, but now he had adopted the role of an enemy. Bhima then aimed his mace at Drona's chariot which crumbled into pieces. Drona took another chariot which was also broken into pieces by Bhima. Drona lost eight chariots that day.

Bhima proceeded to mow down all opposition and finally reached that part of the battlefield where Arjun was fighting against Jayadratha's forces. When Bhima looked at Arjun from a distance, he roared like a lion. Hearing his war cry, Arjun and Shri Krishna were exceedingly pleased and yelled in a loud voice, filled with confidence and joy. Yudhishthir listened to those screams and got relieved from his anxieties about Arjun's safety. He pronounced blessings on Arjun and prayed to God Almighty that before the sunset Arjun should be able to slay Jayadratha to avenge his son's death. Noble and peace-loving Yudhishthir still thought that after Jayadratha's death, Duryodhana might agree to a peaceful settlement and prevent further slaughter of kings and warriors. Yudhishthir lamented that grandsire Bhishma's life had been sacrificed in that battle; would it stop before the sacrifice of the life of Guru Drona and so many other near and dear ones? He was hoping that the wicked enmity might end and humanity might be saved from further destruction.

While Dharmaputra was thus hoping against hope, a ferocious battle was raging with great fury. Bhima, Satyaki, and Arjun were engaged in the most disastrous war ever fought in the history of humankind. It was the 14th day of the war, and the brutal battle raged at many points and between different warriors. Bhima and Karna were engaged in a violent encounter at one place, Satyaki and Bhurishrava at another and a vicious battle was being fought between Arjun and Jayadratha at a third location. Drona assisted by large numbers of Kuru warriors was at the main front, leading a counter-offensive against the Pandavas and the Panchals.

Unable to bear the roar of Bhima which had provided much relief to Yudhishthir, Karna became inflamed with wrath. He was in no mood to let him go and join Arjun for fighting against Jayadratha. Karna pounced upon Bhima and discharged hundreds of arrows at Bhima, who retaliated with a loud roar and shot arrows which covered Karna from all sides. Karna succeeded in inflicting severe wounds on Bhima, who in retaliation succeeded in killing Karna's charioteer and his horses. Karna thereafter ascended the chariot of his son Vrihasena and fled from the battlefield. Bhima roared like a lion. Arjun twanged his Gandiva, and Krishna blew his conch.

CHAPTER 36

Duryodhana was furious because Bhima and Satyaki went past Drona to assist Arjun in the killing of Jayadratha

Fuming with anger, Duryodhana again went straight to Dronacharya. Casting aspersions on Drona's sincerity in winning the war for the Kauravas, he demanded to know how three heroes, Arjun, Satyaki and Bhima had succeeded in penetrating Kuru army. How could they reach near the King of Sindhu-Sauvira after defeating all of Drona's forces? Drona replied that disastrous results of that wicked and crooked game of dice were now overtaking Duryodhana. The dice have assumed the form of shafts, troops are the players and Jayadratha was the precious stake for which all were fighting that day, and he must be protected at every cost. Therefore, Duryodhana should go immediately to protect Jayadratha whereas the preceptor would stop two Panchal princes, Yudhamanyu and Uttamaujus, from proceeding towards Arjun.

Accordingly, Duryodhana again went with fresh reinforcements to protect Jayadratha from Arjun but got his chariot broken, and horses killed at the hands of two Panchal princes. Meanwhile, Karna came back equipped with a new chariot, filled with deadly weapons. Avoiding Karna, Bhima tried to reach the spot where Arjun was. Karna then challenged Bhima not to show his back to him. Excited with wrath, Bhima at that time discharged at Karna many lethal weapons and pierced Karna's chest. Retaliating, Karna succeeded in shattering Bhima's tough armour

and shot several Narachas which penetrated his vital parts. Bhima started bleeding all over. Red with anger, Bhima succeeded in cutting off Karna's bow, but Karna threw a mighty powerful lance at Bhima, who cut off that lance with his sharp shafts. Both fought with full fury; reproaching each other, shouting at each other as they continued fighting without any respite. Then Bhima succeeded in killing Karna's charioteer and horses. Duryodhana at that time sent his brother Durjaya to extend support to Karna. Excited with wrath, Bhima dispatched Durjaya and his horses to Yama's abode.

Karna was in no mood to withdraw. He then shot some very potent arrows which severely wounded Bhima. Bhima's eyes became red with rage, and with his shafts, he again killed the charioteer and the steeds of Karna's chariot. Karna stood on the battleground fearlessly stretching his bow. Duryodhana then sent his another brother Durmukha to go and supply another chariot full of weapons to Karna. Bhima, at that time, drove his chariot towards Durmukha and dispatched him to the abode of death. Karna had tears in his eyes, he circumambulated the slain prince and then got into the chariot, ready to fight with Bhima. Karna severely wounded Bhima with his Narachas. Bhima in retaliation killed Karna's charioteer, and with a three-winged shaft, he hurt and afflicted Radha's son so much that he again fled from the battlefield. Dhritarashtra at that point shared his surprise with Sanjay saying that Duryodhana always used to say that Karna alone was capable of defeating five Pandavas and Lord Krishna and that it is unbelievable that he is repeatedly losing and running away from the battlefield.

Beholding Karna defeated by Bhimasen, Duryodhana sent his five powerful brothers to attack Bhima. Looking at the five princes, Karna came back and attacked mighty-armed Bhima. Bhima fought with such fury that he succeeded in sending all five Kuru princes to Yama's abode. Enraged at looking at those dead princes, Karna was overwhelmed with rage as well as with guilt. Karna attacked Bhima with sharp shafts, but Bhima launched a ferocious counter-attack. He again killed Karna's charioteer and horses and also cut off his bow. Furious Karna got down from the chariot and hurled a mighty mace on Bhima who cut it on the way and then severely wounded the great warrior Karna. King Duryodhana sent his five more brothers to attack Bhima and assist Karna. Bhima however again succeeded in killing those five Kuru princes.

Considering himself guilty for the slaughter of so many Kuru princes, Karna fought with renewed vigour. His eyes were looking coppery with rage; breathing like a fierce snake, Karna then showered mighty shafts from his bow on Vrikodara. Vrikodara in retaliation covered Karna all around with his sharp arrows. Duryodhana then asked all his warriors to go and assist Karna. Seven brothers of

Duryodhana then ran to help Karna; they showered arrowy torrents on Bhima. Bhima shot seven arrows with golden wings, whetted on a stone, at those Kuru princes in quick succession, which took the lives of all seven princes. When Dhritarashtra started lamenting for the slaughter of his sons by Bhima, Sanjay then reminded the monarch that he himself was to be blamed for what was happening. He had disregarded the advice from Bhishma Pitamah, Dronacharya, and Vidur; he was, in fact, responsible for pushing the entire Kuru race into this disastrous war just to please his wicked son.

Bhima was in a hurry to vanquish Karna so that he could reach by the side of Arjun, but Karna just would not let him do so. Inflamed with wrath, Karna finally made use of magical weapons and cut off the string of Bhima's bow; he also cut off his pair of quivers. Karna also killed steeds of Bhima's chariot and wounded his charioteer. Bhima hurled a fearful lance vehemently at Karna's chariot. Karna tore it to fragments with his arrow. Red with rage, Bhima at that time sprang upon Karna, who hid himself inside his chariot. Bhima caught hold of the flagstaff of Karna's chariot and stood on the ground. By now Bhima's stock of weapons had got exhausted, but he was in no mood to withdraw or to concede defeat. For some time, he hid behind the huge elephants which had been killed by Arjun. To protect himself from Karna's arrows, Bhima at that time lifted anything he could lay hands on, wheels of broken chariots, limbs of killed horses or elephants and hurled these at Karna. Watching that Bhima was at a huge disadvantage, Karna shouted at Bhima, addressing him as a glutton who did not know the science of war and that he was a savage who should live in a jungle. Thus, hurling insulting taunts at Bhima, Karna made him burn with rage but remembering his words given to Kunti (his real mother) he did not kill Bhima. Suddenly Krishna saw the plight of Bhima and invited Arjun's attention to that.

Looking at the plight of Bhima, Dhananjya's eyes burned red with anger. He shot sharp arrows from his Gandiva, which penetrated Karna's body and wounded him sorely. Karna thereafter turned his attention towards Arjun and Bhima got an opportunity to get into Satyaki's chariot. Dhananjay then shot a dreadful Naracha at Karna, which flew through the sky towards Karna. Desirous of saving Karna, Ashwatthama, son of Drona, cut off that Naracha in mid-air with his pointed arrow. Thereupon inflamed with anger, Arjun pierced Drona's son with his razor-sharp arrows. Drona's son quickly entered into the thick of the army, whereas Arjun kept on terrifying him from behind with his deadly arrows.

In the meantime, that most valiant hero Satyaki was still trying to penetrate into the Kuru army, which looked like a fathomless ocean. Moving his chariot towards east or west, north or south with lightning speed, Satyaki fought against the

Surasenas and the Kalingas. Then crossing through the division of Kalingas, Satyaki approached Dhananjya and was much pleased to have a glimpse of his. Lord Krishna at that time invited Arjun's attention towards Satyaki saying that after inflicting terrible losses on Kuru forces, Satyaki, Arjun's friend, pupil, and admirer, was coming towards him. Janardan then added that Satyaki had reached Arjun after defeating Drona, Kritavarman, and Duryodhana. Arjun at that time, responded saying that he was not happy about Satyaki coming to assist him as he had no information about king Yudhishthir, who had been left to the mercy of Drona. Arjun also had his doubts if Satyaki would be able to defeat Bhurishrava.

Looking at Satyaki, Bhurishrava, son of Somadatta, King of Balkh, felt excited at the prospect of killing Satyaki in battle, as there was an old enmity between them. The background for this hostility was that when Devaki, mother of Shri Krishna, was a maiden, both Somadatta (father of Bhurishrava) and Sini (father of Vasudeva) had competed for her hand, and there was a great battle between the two. Sini won and took Devaki in his chariot on behalf of Vasudeva. Since then, there was great enmity between the two families; Satyaki was Sini's grandson, and Bhurishrava was Somadatta's son. Bhurishrava challenged Satyaki to fight, and Yuyudhana responded like a true hero, inviting him to the encounter then and there. A most ferocious battle ensued between the two. Bhurishrava pierced Satyaki with innumerable arrows and Satyaki, desirous of slaying Bhurishrava, shot some very sharp and poisonous shafts. They fought with lances, darts, and spears and inflicted severe wounds on each other. Then each of them cut other's bow and slew other's horses. Thus they were deprived of their chariots and resorted to sword fighting. They were locked in a deadly fight; they rolled together on the ground, got up and sprang on each other, and the combat went on for a long time.

Arjun was fully engrossed in watching Jayadratha's movements when Krishna told him that exhausted Satyaki was locked in an unequal battle with Bhurishrava and unless Arjun helped him Bhurishrava would slay him. Even as Shri Krishna was saying this to Arjun, Bhurishrava lifted Satyaki and threw him down on the ground. Then Bhurishrava dragged Satyaki as a lion would drag its prey. At that time Bhurishrava kept his foot on the prostrate body of Satyaki and raised his sword to slay him. Just at that moment, Arjun shot an arrow which went with lightning speed and chopped off the uplifted arm of Bhurishrava still holding the sword.

Stunned and shocked, Bhurishrava turned and saw what Arjun had done. Bhurishrava admonished Arjun saying that what he had done was unethical. Arjun responded by saying that if he had not come to the rescue of a friend who had reached within an arrow-shot of distance for supporting him, he would have

committed a greater sin. He also reminded Bhurishrava that it did not behove him to talk of ethics in that war as he was a part of the gang which killed Abhimanyu when he was alone, exhausted and weaponless. Arjun also clarified that he had taken an oath to protect every friend seen within a bow-shot.

Bhurishrava then sat in a yoga posture on a seat of his arrows. Satyaki recovered consciousness, rose from the ground, and he picked up his sword. He proceeded towards Bhurishrava, and before anyone could come to prevent him, he severed Bhurishrava's head, which rolled down while his body remained in the posture of meditation. Dhritarashtra at that time commented that this was what determination could do. For honouring his promise given to Yudhishthir, Satyaki crossed the ocean of Kuru army, remaining unvanquished by Drona, Karna, Kritavarman, and Bhurishrava; he finally reached where Arjun was preparing to slay Jayadratha. Dhritarashtra, however, still felt reassured that Shalya and Kripa were protecting Jayadratha.

CHAPTER 37

Arjun succeeded in killing Jayadratha before the Sunset on the fourteenth day of the war

Duryodhana at that point was extremely worried, and he shared his thought with his bosom friend Karna. He said that if, before the sunset Arjun failed to slay Jayadratha, he would kill himself for not having redeemed his pledge. With the death of Arjun, the destruction of Pandavas would be sure, and Kurus would have unquestioned sovereignty over the entire kingdom. This opportunity had been offered to the Kurus by Arjun in a moment of thoughtlessness. Encashing this opportunity for the benefit of the Kauravas depended upon the prowess and dexterity of Karna. There is very little time left before sunset. If Karna, Shalya, Kripa, and Ashwatthama do not let Jayadratha fall into the hands of Arjun, then war is practically won by the Kauravas. Karna replied that Bhima had wounded his entire body and all his limbs were aching, but Karna was ever willing even to lay down his life for his dear king Duryodhana.

When the conversation was, thus, going on between Karna and Duryodhana, Arjun was launching a fiery attack on the Kaurava army so that he could find a way to reach Jayadratha before sunset. Furious Dhananjaya slaughtered the warriors, killed the horses, and cut off the trunks of elephants. Somehow Arjun fought his way and appeared in front of Jayadratha. Duryodhana, Karna, Kripa, Shalya, Ashwatthama all attacked him at the same time from all sides, waiting for the sun

to set very soon. Karna fought with all his might. Bhima launched a counter-attack on Karna. Then the greatest bowman of the world, Arjun struck Karna on the vital parts, and his body got steeped in blood all over. But Karna that day was unstoppable. The warriors commented that he would either lay down his own life or see the son of Kunti dead. Beholding the prowess of Karna, Arjun killed all the four horses of Karna's chariot and also killed his charioteer.

Ashwatthama then took Karna in his chariot, and the two, along with Shalya, were constantly attacking Arjun from all sides and with all kinds of weapons. Arjun fought a miraculous war, which was almost magical. He made himself visible in all directions; no one could discern when he placed his arrows on Gandiva bowstring and in which direction he shot them. Arjun invoked the terrible Indra Weapon, from which came out thousands of blazing arrows and shot into all directions. These arrows sent thousands of warriors to Yama's abode. Kunti's son was moving around in the battlefield like death incarnate. To all the creatures on earth, Arjun appeared to be looking like the sun shining on the meridian. After that covering all the directions with his arrows, the great warrior Arjun dashed towards Jayadratha. He then pierced him with many shafts. Kuru warriors by now had started losing hopes about Jayadratha's life.

Jayadratha, the ruler of Sindhu, then launched a counter-attack on Arjun and shot many effulgent arrows. Arjun then repulsed these sharp arrows and cut off the head of the jayadratha's charioteer. Meanwhile, the sun was quickly going below the horizon. Shri Krishna at that time told Arjun that by making use of his yogic/ magical/hypnotic powers, he would make it appear to Jayadratha as if the sun had already set. When he would be thus filled with delight, and no longer conceal himself, then Arjun should send his shafts in such a manner that Jayadratha's head is cut and carried away to Vriddhakshatra's lap without letting it touch the ground.

अस्तंगत इति व्यक्तं द्रक्ष्यत्येकः स सिन्धुराट् ।
हर्षेण जिविताकाङ्क्षी विनाशार्थं तव प्रभो ।। द्रोणा पर्व 7/146/64 ।।
न गोप्स्यति दुराचारः स आत्मानं कथंचन ।।
तत्र छिद्रे प्रहर्तव्यं त्वयास्य कुरुसत्तम ।। द्रोणा पर्व 7/146/65 ।।
व्यपेक्षा नैव कर्तव्या गतोऽस्तमिति भास्करः।।
एवमस्त्विति बीभत्सुः केशवं प्रत्यभाषत ।। द्रोणा पर्व 7/146/66 ।।

Meaning: Shri Krishna said that making use of his yogic/hypnotic powers, he would cover the Sun in such a manner that only the ruler of Sindhu, Jayadratha would see it as already set. Filled with delight and confident of his life, that wicked creature would no longer hide himself. Taking advantage of that opportunity, Arjun should strike him. (It is thus evident that there is no reference to any eclipse here).

The illusion got created at that time. Either very dark clouds entirely covered the Sun, or there was an effect of some kind of hypnotism on Jayadratha and his accomplices that they thought that the Sun had set. Jayadratha looked at the western horizon and felt relaxed, thinking that he had been saved from death at the hands of Arjun as the sun had already set. Just then a shaft flew from Arjun's Gandiva and severing Jayadratha's head carried it away. Arjun did not let it fall on the ground; he made a chain of arrows which carried the severed head of Jayadratha straight into the lap of his father, Vriddhakshatra. Vriddhakshatra was sitting in meditation outside his ashram in Kurukshetra region at that time. The father of Jayadratha finished his meditation and got up when jayadratha's head rolled down and fell on the ground. As already ordained and revealed through divine pronouncement at the time of the birth of Jayadratha, Vriddhakshatra's head burst into hundred fragments immediately after that. As a result, both Jayadratha and his father together reached the abode of Yama. A little later, the Sun went down the horizon, and thus Arjun had fulfilled his vow of slaying Jayadratha before the Sunset that day. In this manner, Arjun finally took revenge for the untimely and unethical slaughter of his son Abhimanyu.

Shri Krishna blew his Panchajanya and Arjun blew his conch Devadatta, Bhima and Satyaki blew their conches and gave a loud roar of triumph. Yudhishthir, who heard the triumphant noise, heaved a sigh of relief thinking that Arjun had redeemed his oath and Jayadratha had been slain.

Yudhishthir's forces then attacked Drona with the object of slaying him. The enmity between the Kauravas and the Pandavas had intensified so much, that even the rule of ceasefire at sunset was not observed on that day. On seeing Dhananjaya slaying king of Sindhu-Sauvira just before the sunset, Kripa, Ashwatthama and many other Kaurava warriors rushed against Arjun and showered sharp and poisonous arrows even after the sunset. Dhananjaya did not want to kill his preceptor Kripa nor did he wish to kill Drona's son Ashwatthama. Therefore, he was discharging mild arrows only to save himself. Then suddenly on being hit by an arrow shot by Arjun, Kripa fell senseless in his chariot. Arjun was filled with remorse and repentance. Furious Karna proceeded towards Arjun to attack him. Satyaki and two Panchal princes intercepted him.

Lord Krishna then blew his Panchajanya in *Rishab* note. Hearing the loud sound his charioteer Daruka understood the hint and brought Shri Krishna's chariot. Satyaki ascended that car and charged at Karna. At that time, everybody saw a superhuman battle between the two warriors of great prowess. Satyaki pierced Karna with his sharp arrows, felled his charioteer, and killed the horses of his chariot. Anguished Karna got into the car of Duryodhana. Sanjay informed

Dhritarashtra that eight Akshauhini of Kuru forces had been slaughtered and 31 sons of Dhritarashtra had lost their lives in that deadly war which was the result of improper policies followed by the monarch. Bhima told Arjun that he wanted to slay Karna as he had said some malicious and nasty words to him when Karna had deprived him of his chariot for some time.

Furious with rage, Arjun told Karna that he would lose his life for humiliating Bhima in that manner. Krishna inspired Arjun saying that his prowess resembled that of Indra and that he would surely succeed in killing Karna. Shri Krishna then drove Arjun in the chariot towards Yudhishthir. On the way, Janardan showed to Arjun the destruction caused by him in the war during the day. The slaughtered warriors, horses, and elephants were lying scattered all over. The earth was full of broken armours, severed chariot wheels, headgears of kings and warriors, broken quivers, bows and maces. Shri Krishna then speedily approached Yudhishthir and informed him in detail about the massacre of Jayadratha.

King Yudhishthir wiped tears from his eyes and admired Shri Krishna, saying that all their achievements were due to Krishna's support and blessings. Those who worship Lord Krishna, they get rid of all difficulties, and by taking refuge in Shri Krishna, Yudhishthir would surely regain prosperity. Shri Krishna appreciated Arjun's prowess saying that no one in the world could compare with Arjun in mastery over weapons. He also admired the strength with which Satyaki and Bhima had fought the war that day and assisted Arjun in fulfilling his vow. Yudhishthir embraced Arjun, Satyaki, and Bhima one by one, and started shedding tears of joy. A new zeal got instilled into the forces of Pandavas, and they concentrated whole heatedly on winning the war after that.

Chapter 38

Karna had to use his unfailing weapon, received from Indra, to kill Ghatotkach on the fourteenth day of the war

After watching his brother-in-law Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu-Sauvira, slain by Arjun, Duryodhana felt dejected and shed tears of despair and remorse. Deep inside, he had now realized that Drona or Karna was not capable of facing Arjun in the battleground. With a dejected heart, Duryodhana went to Drona, and he spoke about the great slaughter of Kurus that day. He lamented the fall of Bhishma Pitamah at the hands of Shikhandin, fulfilling his vow of previous birth. Arjun had avenged Draupadi's abduction as well as Abhimanyu's death by slaying Jayadratha. Mighty heroes like Bhurishrava, Surasena, Jalasandh and Kamboja had laid down their lives for the sake of Duryodhana. Duryodhana swore that he would discharge the debt of these slain heroes by destroying the Pandavas, or he would depart to the heavenly regions to join those heroes. Duryodhana then lamented that Bhishma had fallen in war because he had ordained his own death and Drona also was not doing his best as he had a soft corner for his disciple Arjun.

Hearing these words, Dronacharya felt very sad and told Duryodhana that he himself, Bhishma and Vidura were always telling him that it was impossible to be victorious when the battle was being fought with Arjun, protected by Lord Krishna. They were all advising Duryodhana to enter into a fair and peaceful settlement

with Pandavas, but Duryodhana disregarded the advice from all elders and well-wishers. Dragging Draupadi before the Kuru assembly was a sinful act for which divine punishment was unavoidable. Duryodhana piled atrocities on Pandavas by first defeating them in the game of dice through deceit; after that, his hatred for righteous and noble Pandavas was ignited by Karna, Dushasana, and Shakuni. Duryodhana, however, again insinuated about Drona not giving his hundred per cent to defeat the Pandavas. Drona then threw back the argument at Duryodhana asking that he himself, Karna, Kripa, Shalya, Ashwatthama were all there to defend Jayadratha but why did the king of Sindhu-Sauvira still get slain? Drona revealed his own fears from Dhrishtadhyumna, who was born to take revenge from Drona for the humiliation piled on his father, Drupada. Nevertheless, Drona assured him that he would fight for Duryodhana till his last breath and asked Duryodhana also to concentrate on winning the war.

Duryodhana then went to Karna and shared his anguish that if Drona had put in his best Jayadratha would not have been killed. Karna advised Duryodhana not to blame Guru Dronacharya, who was fighting to his best. He was old whereas Arjun was young and had Shri Krishna for his charioteer. Karna at that time conceded that their defeat in that war was probably pre-ordained. Destiny was all-powerful. Attempts were made to kill Pandavas by administering poison, to burn them in a wax palace and sending them to forests through the rigged game of dice but they survived every time. Only destiny would decide the outcome of that war as well.

When Duryodhana and Karna were thus conversing, the Pandava army launched a fierce attack against Kuru forces. A brutal fight raged between the Kurus and the Panchals. The sun had already set, and in the dark, it was difficult to distinguish between Kurus and Panchals. Duryodhana rushed against Pandavas like a hurricane. Wild with anger, Duryodhana killed thousands of Pandava soldiers. Bhimasen, Nakul, and Sahadev advanced against Duryodhana, but angry Duryodhana succeeded in inflicting wounds on all three of them with his sharp arrows. Kuru king also pierced Virat, Drupad, and Shikhandin in that battle. Watching his forces getting demoralized, Yudhishthir then rushed towards Duryodhana intending to kill him. Duryodhana succeeded in injuring the loyal charioteer of Dharmaputra and wounded his horses as well. Yudhishthir cut into three pieces Duryodhana's bow and also injured him. Yudhishthir then shot a dreadful arrow on Duryodhana, who fell down in the chariot with a thud.

People around at that time thought that Kuru king had been slain, but soon Duryodhana got up and picking up his bow pounced upon Pandavas. Drona also entered the battlefield and started slaughtering the Pandava forces. All five

Pandava brothers, accompanied by Virat and Drupada advanced against Drona. The night became darker; elephants and horses were not able to see clearly. A terrible and brutal nocturnal battle was being fought between Drona and his forces on one side and Pandavas and Srinjayas on the other. Thousands of warriors were slaughtered by Drona alone that night. Bhima mounted his own chariot and started the slaughter of Kuru forces. Durmada and Dushkarna, two sons of Dhritarashtra, then attacked Bhima, but he crushed these two princes to death with his powerful blows. Thus demoralized, Kuru soldiers started running away from the battlefield. At that time Duryodhana and Dushasana, led by Drona, surrounded Bhima from all sides and an awe-inspiring battle ensued.

Drona shot sharp and poisonous arrows at all opponents and in all directions. His arrows pierced Yudhishthir, Bhima, Nakul, Sahadev, Shikhandin, and all five sons of Draupadi. Seeing the Pandava armies thus being slaughtered by Drona, Arjun advanced against the preceptor. Arjun then asked Shri Krishna to take his chariot towards Dronacharya and Bhima followed close behind. Their armies followed suit. Arjun attacked the right flank of the Kuru army, and Bhima attacked the left side. At that time, son of Bhima named Ghatotkach, who possessed enormous strength, charged at Kuru forces like a tempest. This Rakshasa hurled arrows, spears, axes, and *bhushundis* as a result of which the elephants, horses, and warriors died. The Kuru forces started running away with fear, but Ashwatthama stood fearless and destroyed the illusion created by Ghatotkach. After that, a terrible war was fought between the two.

Ghatotkach hurled a razor-sharp wheel with thousand spokes on Ashwatthama, but he cut it into fragments. With eyes looking like copper in wrath, Ghatotkach started showering big and sharp arrows at Drona's son. Dhrishtadhyumna came to support Ghatotkach in his fight against Ashwatthama. He discharged deadly arrows, fierce like poisonous snakes, on Ashwatthama; whereas he in retaliation shot hundreds of Narachas at him. The followers of Ghatotkach also infiltrated the battlefield riding on elephants, horses, and chariots. Duryodhana felt uncomfortable and frightened on looking at Ghatotkach and other Rakshasas, but Ashwatthama, always remaining loyal to him, asked him to vanquish all fears. That day Ashwatthama single-handed slaughtered thousands of Rakshasas in that battlefield. Excited with anger, Ghatotkach wounded Ashwatthama with his sharp arrows. Using a broad-headed shaft, Bhima's son Ghatotkach thereafter, cut off the effulgent bow wielded by Drona's son. Ashwatthama retaliated with fury and annihilated that army of Rakshasas in the presence of Ghatotkach. Bhimasen then made his appearance in the battlefield in support of his son Ghatotkach. Ashwatthama was roaming in the battleground like death incarnate.

Seeing that sons of Drupad and Kuntibhoj and thousands of Rakshasa soldiers were killed in that battle by Ashwatthama, Yudhishthir, in consultation with Bhima, Dhrishtadhyumna, and Satyaki, reframed the battle strategy. A violent encounter followed between Somadatta and Satyaki. Bhima fought in support of Satyaki. Hit by a Parigha hurled by Bhima, and by a dart discharged by Satyaki, Somadatta fell unconscious. Then Bhima struck heroic Balhika dead. Watching that Balhika and his grandson, Bhurishrava, had been killed in that war, whereas son Somadatta had been severely wounded, 10 sons of Dhritarashtra attacked Bhima with fury. Bhima shot deadly arrows at each one of them, and very soon they all left for Yama's abode. After that, the brothers of Shakuni attacked Bhima. Yudhishthir at that time, furious with anger, began crushing Kuru forces. He killed the Ambasthas, the Malavas, the Trigartas and the Shivis. Then, suddenly a tumultuous uproar was heard all around, "slay, seize, capture, and cut to pieces".

Seeing Yudhishthir slaughter his forces, Drona was exceedingly enraged; he discharged the weapon presided over by Vayu (wind) on Yudhishthir. However, he destroyed that celestial weapon with another weapon. Drona then hurled at Pandu king the *Varuna*, the *Agneya* and the *Savitra astras* one by one intending to kill him. Yudhishthir, on the other hand, dauntlessly baffled all these weapons. Desirous of giving victory to Duryodhana, Drona called into existence the weapon presided over by Prajapati to slay Yudhishthir. However, by calling into existence the Mahendra weapon, Yudhishthir could baffle even Prajapati weapon (7/157/34-38). With his divine and powerful weapons being neutralised by Yudhishthir, Drona was filled with anger. He called into existence the weapon presided over by Brahma, which could only be seen by Yudhishthir in the darkness of that night. The son of Kunti stumped that weapon using another weapon presided over by Brahma.

Then, leaving the son of Kunti aside, furious Drona started destroying the army of Drupad. At that time, the terrorized Panchals began fleeing in the very presence of Bhima and Arjun. Then rallying their armies, they both attacked the Kuru forces, which started running away. Duryodhana at that time beseeched Karna to save the Kuru forces. Karna pledged that he would kill Arjun in war and even if Indra himself came in person, he would not be able to save the son of Pandu. Karna assured Duryodhana that he would use his unfailing weapon presided over by Indra and surely slay him. Once Arjun was killed, his brothers would either accept Duryodhana's sovereignty or leave for the forests again. Kripa intervened to render advice to Karna that he should stop boasting and stop underestimating the prowess of sons of Kunti. Karna did not like these words of advice from Kripa and said some extraordinarily impolite and humiliating things to him.

Ashwatthama did not like this insult of his heroic maternal uncle Kripa and admonished Karna. He reminded Karna that he had run away in Viratanagar while facing Arjun's arrows. He also enquired where was Karna's prowess when Arjun slaughtered Jayadratha in front of his eyes! Karna retaliated, and a war of words followed between the two. Duryodhana made strenuous efforts to calm them down. In the meantime, Pandava forces, after reorganizing themselves, launched a fierce attack and pitched battle took place between the two armies. There was a downpour of arrows from both sides. Karna displayed wonderful light handedness and sorely afflicted the kings and warriors of Pandava forces. Arjun then started advancing towards Karna and Duryodhana requested Ashwatthama to protect Karna. Seeing Arjun advancing against him, Karna attacked Arjun, and a fierce fight followed. Then Arjun cut off Karna's bow, killed his charioteer, and slaughtered his horses. Karna escaped by getting into the car of Kripa, and they started running away.

Duryodhana called Karna and Kripa back, saying that he himself was going to fight against Dhananjay. But Kripa told Ashwatthama that the Kuru king must be prevented from fighting the war as the war was raging only for the king and, till he is alive, they all would fight united against the sons of Kunti. Duryodhana then pleaded with Ashwatthama to display his real prowess and defeat the enemy forces. Ashwatthama then upbraided Duryodhana for his suspicious nature and reminded him that sons of Pandu were as dear to him and his father Drona as the sons of Dhritrashtra. Ashwatthama objected to the wily Kuru King suspecting them of wrong-doing when he, his father Drona and his maternal uncle Kripa were putting in their best efforts to facilitate the victory of Kurus, that too, in a war where situations and positions were changing constantly.The Pandavas were brave, noble, and competent, and they also had the capability to destroy Kaurava troops.

Ashwatthama then jumped into the battleground and started destroying the Pandava forces. He slaughtered Panchals, Somakas, and Pandava soldiers ruthlessly. Seeing them distressed, Dhrishtadhyumna rushed against the son of Drona and then challenged him to fight with him instead of fighting against the soldiers. Dhrishtadhyumna struck the Ashwatthama with dreadful arrows capable of piercing the vital parts, which caused unbearable pain. Ashwatthama in retaliation showered sharp arrows on the son of Drupad. Dhrishtadhyumna then told him that he would not kill him until he killed his father. The very next day, he would first kill Drona and then send his son to the abode of departed spirits, he told him. Ashwatthama did not like these haughty words and rained poisonous arrows on Dhrishtadhyumna. A fierce encounter followed. For some time, the battle appeared to be equally balanced, but soon the son of Drona cut off the bow of Dhrishtadhyumna

and killed his charioteer and his horses. In the presence of Arjun, he also killed more than a hundred car-warriors of Panchals. Panchals at that time fled from the battlefield and Ashwatthama was sending forth thundering roars.

Then, Yudhishthir and Bhima, along with their forces, surrounded Ashwatthama from all sides. Duryodhana then charged against the Pandavas. When the world was thus enveloped in darkness, a ferocious war was raging between the opposing forces. Before that, wars were never fought after sunset. However, during the Mahabharat war, all rules governing the warfare were broken. Due to the darkness all around, the warriors were finding it difficult to distinguish between friends and foes. Duryodhana then ordered his soldiers to take burning lamps in their hands. The Kuru army at that time looked brilliant like the clouds with flashes of lightning at night. Pandavas also asked their soldiers to pick up lamps, place these on their chariots, and hold in hand for the foot soldiers. Then, the nocturnal battle between the combatants raged furiously like a tempest.

During that terrific clash between the two armies, brave warriors fought against courageous warriors, elephant riders encountered other elephant riders, and chariot warriors engaged with the chariot warriors of enemy forces. Watching that Drona was determined to fight a brutal war that night, Duryodhana asked Shalya to protect the right side car wheels of Drona and directed Kritavarman to protect the left side. Then, Duryodhana asked Trigartas and Kurus to protect Drona from all sides. After that, a fierce encounter started between Kaurava and Pandava forces; nobody had earlier witnessed such a dreadful battle at night. When Yudhishthir started proceeding against Drona, Kritavarman rushed against Yudhishthir. Karna fought against Sahadev and Duryodhana himself charged at Bhima. Ashwatthama checked the march of Ghatotkach. Dhrishtadhyumna tried to launch an attack against Drona.

Just as Yudhishthir was proceeding against Drona, Kritavarman launched a brutal attack and broke Yudhishthir's bow, sword, and shield. He then succeeded in cutting off Yudhishthir's armour. Yudhishthir had to withdraw. Bhurishrava's father Somdatta wanted to avenge his son's defeat at the hands of Satyaki; he charged at him intending to slay him. Satyaki retaliated by shooting some sharp arrows as a result of which Somadatta fell unconscious. Ashwatthama then attacked Satyaki with the desire to kill him. Ghatotkach challenged Ashwatthama and rained sharp arrows on him. Furious Ashwatthama rained razor-sharp arrows on Ghatotkach; stuck on his body all around these looked like the quills of a porcupine. Enraged Ghatotkach then fired 10 blazing arrows at Ashwatthama, which much afflicted him, and he fell into a swoon. Regaining consciousness after

some time, Ashwatthama made the son of Bhima lose his consciousness. Dhrishtadhyumna removed him from the battlefield, thinking that he was probably dead.

Dhrishtadhyumna attacked Drona and shot a lethal arrow at him. It was cut into pieces on the way by Karna, and he then showered several deadly arrows at Dhrishtadhyumna. Shalya, Dushasana, Duryodhana, and Shakuni all stated hurling different types of weapons on him. Satyaki came to support Dhrishtadhyumna, and a fierce fight followed. Karna then heard the twang of Arjun's Gandiva, and he told Duryodhana to stop Arjun from proceeding further so that Karna could first vanquish Dhrishtadhyumna and Satyaki. Duryodhana sent Shakuni to launch an attack on Arjun. Shakuni attacked Arjun, who retaliated by killing hundreds of Kuru warriors. He killed Shakuni's horses, severed his bow; he had to take refuge in his son Uluka's chariot. Dhrishtadhyumna continued his fight against Drona and his forces. He and Arjun routed Kaurava forces, and Pandava heroes blew their conches.

Seeing his troops slain and vanquished, Duryodhana went to Drona and Karna complaining that they did not succeed in fulfilling their vow of vanquishing Pandavas in the nocturnal fight that day. Stung by his words, they attacked Pandavas with renewed vigour and fury. They slaughtered a large number of Pandava warriors and they started fleeing from the battlefield. Drona and Karna continued their attacks from behind. Karna and Dhrishtadhyumna exchanged sharp arrows. Karna severed Dhrishtadhyumna's bow and killed his charioteer as well as horses; he then mounted Sahadev's chariot. Yudhishthir, seeing the rout of his forces, requested Arjun to take the situation under his control. Shri Krishna, however, suggested that, instead, Ghatotkach should be sent to kill Karna.

Ghatotkach started advancing towards Karna with brutal intentions. Duryodhana then deputed Dushasana to protect Karna. At that time Alambala, son of Rakshasa Jatasura, came to assist Duryodhana in killing Ghatotkach to avenge the death of his father at the hands of Pandavas. The two Rakshasas fought with the fury of a thunderstorm trying to smash each other's head. Finally, Ghatotkach lifted Alambala, threw him down, and then severed his head with a sword. Ghatotkach then threw Alambala's head in Duryodhana's chariot. Ghatotkacha and Karna exchanged weapons of all kinds. Ghatotkacha used all types of illusions and Karna responded by making use of celestial weapons. Karna pierced Ghatotkach all over with sharp shafts, and Ghatotkach assumed puzzling sequence of illusory forms and threw all kinds of powerful weapons on Kuru forces. Ghatotkach then threw a thunderbolt at Karna, who caught it and hurled it back and it reduced Ghatotkach's chariot to ashes.

Ghatotkach after that, joined by Pandava armies, roared cheerfully. Karna then shot some excellent iron arrows on Dhrishtadhyumna and Shikhandin, Uttamaujus and Satyaki. He started forcing back Pandu warriors with his incomparable sharp arrows, which fell like thunderbolts. Some lost their elephants; some lost their horses, and some others lost their own lives; Yudhishthir's forces were, thus, getting demoralized. Ghatotkach became extremely angry and charged at Karna. The two warriors made the sky resound with showers of variety of arrows, including barbed ones, reed-arrows, and razor-sharp arrows. The fight between them was so equal and so ferocious that no one could tell which of them had greater strength.

When Ghatotkach could not vanquish Karna, he used a divine weapon which killed Karna's charioteer and his horses, and then suddenly disappeared. Bhima's son through Hidimba then created an illusion in the sky, which looked like fire blazing amid red clouds; it was dreadful and fearful. From these terrible looking red clouds, there started falling torrents of arrows, spears, lances, axes, rocks, and thunderbolts. Warriors, elephants, chariots, horses were seen falling dead and reeling under affliction. Karna single-handed could not have stopped that. The Kaurava forces were frightened, and survivors started fleeing from the battlefield. Undaunted; however, Karna stood facing the Rakshasa. Then, Ghatotkach killed the horses of Karna's chariot with a *Sataghni*, and he had to dismount. All the Kurus at that time started requesting Karna to kill that monster Ghatotkach. They pleaded with him to use that unfailing dart, which had been given to him by Lord Indra.

Burning with wrath, Karna then took out that unfailing dart which had been given to him by Indra himself in exchange for his ear-rings. Karna hurled the dart, looking like death itself, at Ghatotkach. The dart, destroying the blazing illusion and going through the breast of Ghatotkach, soared upwards and penetrated into the sky. Thus, after having fought brilliantly with numerous weapons, adopting various illusions that heroic warrior Ghatotkach uttering dreadful roars, fell down dead on the ground. The huge-bodied Ghatotkach fell on Kuru soldiers, killing many of them under his humongous weight. The Kurus whole-heartedly applauded Karna and Duryodhana took him in his own chariot.

Beholding Bhima's brave son lying dead in the battlefield, Pandava brothers shed tears of grief, but Shri Krishna roared with joy and embraced Arjun. Arjun felt quite bewildered with that expression of Shri Krishna at the death of Ghatotkach and asked him to explain his behaviour. Shri Krishna then explained that the only weapon with which Karna could have killed Arjun was the unfailing dart given by Indra, which he had used against Ghatotkach. Krishna told Arjun that, with that dart given by Indra, Karna was invincible and was in a position even to vanquish

Arjun. With Indra's dart gone after its use on Ghatotkach, Karna was as good as dead. Now Arjun could surely slay him in the battleground of Kurukshetra.

To remove Arjun's confusion, Shri Krishna further explained to Arjun that by good luck, Karna's armour and ear-rings were taken away and by good luck now his infallible dart presented to him by Indra had been taken away. With those things, Karna could never have been killed by anyone, not even by Varuna, Yama or Krishna's Sudarshan Chakra. Since Karna could now be defeated and killed, the war had practically been won by Pandavas. Krishna further added that killing Ghatotkach was necessary as he harassed the Brahmanas by destroying their yajnas. For establishing righteousness, it was also essential that Karna was deprived of *Shakti* given to him by Indra. The twin purposes had thus been achieved.

Dhritarashtra then enquired from Sanjay that if Karna had such an unfailing *Shakti* given to him by Indra, why he did not use it earlier to kill Arjun. Sanjay replied that Kauravas had discussed it night after night, but whenever they decided that Karna would use that weapon, Krishna would protect Arjun and send some other Pandava to fight against Karna. The slaughter during that night had not come to an end. The tired and sleepless warriors were dozing off on their chariots and elephants. Drona and Karna had started slaughtering the Pandava army. Yudhishthir decided to fight against Karna whereas Bhima went to battle against Drona. The battle raged, but combatants of both sides were struggling in their sleep. Arjun then announced ceasefire till Moonrise and warriors took some rest. Very soon, however, the Moon was shining high in the sky, and the battle was resumed.

CHAPTER 39

Dhrishtadhyumna succeeded in killing Drona on fifteenth day of the war

Duryodhana again approached Drona and complained that he was not doing enough to vanquish Pandavas. Drona told that Arjun was invincible, but Duryodhana boasted that he along with Karna, Shakuni, and Dushasana would kill Arjun. Drona laughed and asked him to keep his word. Battle continued all through the night and right into the 15th day of the war. Drona attacked Pandavas with such fury that they were all struck with fear. Drona that day fired all kinds of weapons on Panchals and Matsyas. He attacked them with such intensity that even King Drupad and King Virat could not save their lives. Three grandsons of Drupad were also sent to the abode of Death by Drona that morning. Watching his father as well as his son killed by Drona, Dhrishtadhyumna was full of anger and grief. He swore that he would kill Drona by the evening of that day. He attacked Drona with vigour and Bhima supported him from behind.

Very fierce single combats were then being fought in different parts of that battlefield. Duryodhana and Dushasana were fighting the twins Nakul and Sahadev, Karna battled against Bhima and Drona was fighting against Arjun. Sahadev severed the head of Dushasana's charioteer with such rapidity that Dushasana could not even realize what had happened until his horses went out of control. Karna, on the other hand, killed Bhima's charioteer and horses and he had to jump into Nakul's chariot. A furious war was raging between Arjun and Drona. Drona resorted to using numerous celestial weapons, but these were baffled by Arjun.

Drona had potent weapons, which were capable of slaying all the Pandavas. Shri Krishna at that time told Arjun that Drona was incapable of being conquered so long as he was wielding his weapons; he could be slain only by using some stratagem making him lay aside his arms. One thing that could make Drona desist from fighting was if someone told him that Ashwatthama was dead. Then Drona would lose all interest in life as well as in war and would throw aside his weapons. Arjun was reluctant to accept this advice of telling a lie but Yudhishthir that day agreed to commit the sin of telling that lie. He wanted to save his forces from slaughter and defeat at the hands of Drona. Then Bhima went and killed an elephant named Ashwatthama belonging to the king of Malavas with his mace. Approaching Drona, he then told that Ashwatthama had been slain.

Drona did not believe him entirely. Furious with anger and thinking of Dhrishtadhyumna who was said to have been born to slay him, Drona then displayed the dance of death in the battlefield. He invoked a Brahma weapon and slaughtered thousands of warriors. Then he recollected what Bhima had said and went to confirm the assertion from Yudhishthir about the alleged death of his son Ashwatthama. Krishna and Bhima reminded Yudhishthir that their very survival depended upon Drona laying down the arms and that would happen only if he were told that Ashwatthama was dead. Afraid of speaking lies and anxious to obtain victory, Yudhishthir said vociferously that Ashwatthama was killed, adding the word elephant in a low, inaudible voice.

Overwhelmed with grief on the supposed death of his son Ashwatthama, Drona gave way to despair and was unable to fight. He became extremely anxious and depressed due to unbearable grief. At that time, impelled by the desire to slay Drona, Dhrishtadhyumna shot at him a formidable arrow resembling a poisonous snake and endued with the effulgence of fire. Seeing that arrow directed at him, Dronacharya did not try to baffle it. However, half-heartedly, Drona took another bow and showered arrows which killed Dhrishtadhyumna's horses and broke his chariot. Dhrishtadhyumna hurled a mace at Drona which was cut off by him. Furious with rage, Dhrishtadhyumna took up his sword and rushed upon Drona just as Peacock swoops down on a snake. Drona, however, cut off his sword and shield and shot a deadly arrow at Dhrishtadhyumna, but Satyaki intercepted it on the way. Thus, unlike the common belief that Drona stopped fighting on hearing about Ashwatthama's death, only his vigour and enthusiasm in fighting the war got reduced.

Duryodhana, Kripa, and Karna jointly attacked Satyaki at that point and a vicious battle followed. Bhima, Nakul, and Sahadev then rushed to defend Satyaki. Yudhishthir then asked all the Kshatriyas to launch a joint and fierce attack on

Drona to enable Dhrishtadhyumna to fulfil his vow. They all attacked him from all sides, but Drona still succeeded in slaying thousands of Panchals. Bhima then instigated Dhrishtadhyumna to put an end to Drona's life. Dhrishtadhyumna thereafter shot all types of weapons at Drona, but all these were cut off or baffled by him.

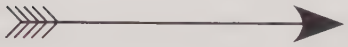
Bhima then held the chariot of Drona and admonished him saying that being a Brahman, Drona should have been teaching dharma and non-violence. He, however, took upon himself the duties of a Kshatriya, rather those of a *chandal*. Consequently, the balance of the world got disturbed; kings and princes were slaughtered, and the number of Kshatriyas had gone down so rapidly, said Bhima to Drona. He added that Drona had probably adopted such a sinful life for the sake of his son, but that son was lying dead in the battlefield. Therefore, asked Bhima, for whom Drona was still slaughtering the warriors and princes. It was at this stage that Drona laid his weapons aside, repeatedly calling Ashwatthama by name. After that, he sat down in his chariot in a yoga posture. Dhrishtadhyumna at that point, took his sword and proceeded towards Drona, dragged him by the hair and in a split second lopped off his head. Drona was about eighty-five years old at that time (7/193/64). Dhrishtadhyumna threw his head in front of the Kuru warriors. Arjun remonstrated Dhrishtadhyumna for killing the preceptor and then throwing away his head with such disrespect. Dhrishtadhyumna responded by saying that Drona was a false Brahman. He had abandoned studies of Vedas and had resorted to the slaughter of Kshatriyas at the bidding of wicked Duryodhana; therefore, it was the duty of a true Kshatriya to slay him.

Hearing that the slaughter of his father had been done by making use of unfair and underhand means, Ashwatthama was filled with grief and was inflamed with rage. Then and there, he took an oath that by hook or by crook, by violent or by peaceful means, he would kill Dhrishtadhyumna. He lamented that his celestial weapons were of no use, if he could not save the life of his father. He then deployed the weapon of Narayan against the Pandava armies. This weapon unleashed a torrent of arrows, iron balls, and other weapons. Pandava troops got killed in large numbers, and many others were afflicted with the wounds. Krishna advised all the five Pandu brothers to cast down their weapons and dismount from their chariots to escape the fury of Narayan weapon. Bhima was, however, caught in the net. Arjun made use of a weapon of Varuna to protect Bhima (7/201). After some time, the sky became clear, a cool breeze started blowing, and Pandava forces revived.

Arjun then admonished his earlier friend Ashwatthama for being partial towards the Kurus and acting unfairly against the Pandu brothers. Arjun did not realize that Ashwatthama was also burning with jealousy, as Arjun always did

better than him when they were under training with Dronacharya. Still furious with anger, Ashwatthama deployed Agneya Astra (fire weapon) against the Pandavas, as a result of which Sun ceased to shine, clouds started raining down blood, and many warriors were slain. Arjun then deployed the weapon of Brahma to restore light and calm, as well as confidence in the Pandava forces (7/202). Since Arjun and Shri Krishna remained entirely unharmed, Sage Vyas at that point came and explained to Ashwatthama that they were both worshippers of Shiva and were always under his protection; therefore, he should stop attacking them. Vyas, however, advised Arjun to resume the fight driven by Shri Krishna as Shiva's support and blessings remained with him.

CHAPTER 40



Duryodhana appointed Karna as the supreme commander; Arjun killed him with Anjalika weapon on the seventeenth day of the war

After narrating to Dhritarashtra all details of battle up to the 15th day, when Dhrishtadhyumna had killed Drona, Sanjay went back to the battlefield. There, he saw from close quarters that Kuru forces fought with great ability and prowess with Karna as their commander-in-chief. He had reported to Dhritarashtra that after Drona's death, Kuru forces felt greatly afflicted, and at that time Duryodhana instilled some confidence in them by extolling Karna's bravery, who was appointed as the commander-in-chief. However, two days later that is on the 17th day of the war, Arjun killed Karna after a prolonged fierce fight. Sanjay went with high speed from Kurukshetra and reported all the details of the war in great detail to Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra was sunk in grief as he was unsure if his own son Duryodhana was alive. He wanted Sanjay to narrate all events relating to the war in great detail.

Sanjay reported that after Drona's death on 15th day of battle, Karna was appointed as the generalissimo (commander of a combined force) of Kuru forces *w.e.f* the morning of the 16th day of the war. Karna arrayed his troops in *Makara* formation with himself placed in the tip of the beak of that *Makara* and Ashwatthama

was stationed in the head. Sitting in a chariot furnished with many bows and quivers full of arrows, maces, lances and spears, Karna looked resplendent like the Sun at that time. Arjun, on the other hand, arrayed his Pandava forces in Half-moon formation. Nakul advanced against Karna whereas Bhima attacked Ashwatthama. Arjun's son Srutakarman succeeded in killing Chitrasena whereas Yudhishthir's son Prativindhya succeeded in slaying Chitrasena's brother. A fierce fight followed between Ashwatthama and Bhima; both were rendered unconscious by each other's arrows.

However, Ashwatthama recovered after some time, and he challenged Arjun for combat. He showered thousands of arrows which were all cut down by Arjun. Arjun then wounded Ashwatthama, and his charioteer took him away from the battlefield. *Samshaptakas* at that time attacked Arjun, but he killed them by thousands. After a short while, Ashwatthama launched a furious attack on Arjun.

Meanwhile, the brave King Pandya attacked the Kuru forces and killed hundreds of warriors. Towards the end of the day, Ashwatthama attacked Pandya King with dexterity, killed his horses, and severed his head. Fierce combats were taking place in different parts of the battlefield. Dhrishtadhyumna was attacked from all sides by the Kuru forces, but Pandava warriors came in large numbers to defend him. Satyaki killed the king of Vanga, and Nakul did slay the lord of Angas. In another part of the battlefield, Sahadev and Dushasana were fighting a brutal battle. Dushasana lost consciousness and was borne away by his charioteer.

Yudhishthir and Duryodhana also were engaged in ferocious combat. Yudhishthir killed Duryodhana's charioteer and his horse. Ashwatthama and Kripa came to his rescue; Duryodhana mounted another chariot and resumed the attack on Yudhishthir. Yudhishthir then hurled a terrible spear at Duryodhana, who fell down unconscious. Karna attacked Satyaki, but Arjun and Krishna came to engage Karna in the battle. Karna abandoned his attack on Satyaki; Arjun, however, succeeded in slaying thousands of Kaurava warriors. When the Sun had set; the war halted, and the Kauravas, as well as the Pandavas, went back to their camps. Dhritarashtra expressed his grief and anguish blaming the destiny, but Sanjay told that the king himself was to be blamed for all the slaughter which was taking place in the battlefield.

It was the morning of the 17th day of the war. Karna told Duryodhana that he would put an end to the war that day by either slaying Arjun or laying down his own life. He, however, wanted a better charioteer, equal to Krishna in calibre, and he suggested the name of Shalya. Duryodhana approached Shalya with the request to act as Karna's charioteer. Shalya was outraged at this humiliation and wanted to go back immediately to his own kingdom. Duryodhana though succeeded in

persuading and convincing Shalya to act as Karna's charioteer. Karna asked Shalya to drive him straight into the battlefield so that he could kill Yudhishthir and his brothers, particularly Arjun. Shalya remembered his earlier promise to Yudhishthir that he would try to shatter the confidence of Karna, if he ever had to act as Karna's charioteer during the war.

Karna proceeded towards the Pandava army, killing thousands of Pandava warriors and promising enormous wealth to those who help him in reaching for Arjun. Karna then boasted how he would slay Arjun and Krishna that day. Shalya, the king of Madra, at that time ridiculed him by saying that actually, he was unaware of the prowess of Arjun driven by Krishna. When Arjun would shoot sharp, effulgent arrows from his Gandiva, then Karna would repent just like a foolish little rabbit that may challenge an elephant. Shalya did not stop at that; he added that it was silly on the part of Karna to think of slaying Arjun and that it was as dangerous as a child poking with a stick at a cobra. Enraged Karna retorted saying that he did not like that glorification of Arjun's prowess and told Shalya to stop uttering such words like an enemy and drive him straight where Arjun was standing ready for combat.

Karna, at that time, said categorically that he was not at all afraid of Arjun's prowess and of Krishna's ability but was worried about Parashuram's curse hurled at him when he lived in the disguise of a Brahman seeking celestial weapons from him. The famous story goes that, when Parashuram learnt that Karna was a Suta and not a Brahman, he cursed that the divine weapon would fail to appear for him when he would be in need. Full of confidence, Karna told Shalya to see him battling against Arjun that day as he would overshadow valiant Arjun, like a mammoth cloud overshadowing the Sun. Arjun might be the best bow-man in the world, but Karna was determined to defeat him in the war that day. Shalya again ridiculed Karna for his self-glorification. Karna snubbed him, saying that he was not a true friend of Duryodhana, although he was fighting from his side. Karna was his faithful friend and was willing to lay down his life for him. Karna then added that, if the need arose, he would even use his divine weapon presided over by Brahma against Arjun.

Karna then told Shalya that whatever he might say but he would not be able to reduce his self-confidence and fearlessness. He, however, was afraid of the curse of a Brahman who, enraged at his calf getting killed, had said that the wheel of Karna's chariot would get stuck in rough ground during a battle. Karna's eldest son Vrishsena was protecting his rear and his two younger sons, Susena and Satyasena, were guarding his left and right wheels. A brutal battle was fought that day between Karna and Kaurava forces on one side and Pandavas and Panchals on the other. Karna was engaged in direct combat with Yudhishthir. He deployed the

weapon of Brahma and succeeded in breaking Yudhishthir's bow, cutting off his armour, and reducing his chariot to pieces. Yudhishthir had to withdraw from the battlefield. Mounting on another chariot, Yudhishthir came back to continue the fight.

Assigning the responsibility of protecting Yudhishthir to Dhrishtadhyumna and Satyaki, Bhima engaged himself in a furious fight against Karna. At that time, one of Bhima's arrows rendered Karna unconscious and Shalya had to take him away. Duryodhana sent many of his brothers to support and protect Karna; they all attacked Bhima, but many of them got killed through the prowess of Bhima. The battle raged on, thousands of soldiers were killed with blood flowing all around the battlefield. King Susharma of Trigarta and his *Samshaptakas* again attacked Arjun, but he killed them in thousands. Kripa at that time attacked Shikhandin; Ashwatthama attacked Yudhishthir displaying incredible exploits of archery. Satyaki and sons of Draupadi counter-attacked Ashwatthama.

Duryodhana battled with Nakul and Sahadev; Dhrishtadhyumna intervened in support of twins and succeeded in destroying Duryodhana's weapons and chariot. Karna again attacked Bhima and Yudhishthir. Watching Karna's activities, Arjun asked Shri Krishna to drive him towards Karna. Ashwatthama attacked Dhrishtadhyumna and broke his chariot as well as weapons. Arjun at that intervened and pierced Ashwatthama with many arrows, while Sahadev bore Dhrishtadhyumna away. Arjun then struck down Ashwatthama's chariot and its reigns. His horses bolted, and Kaurava forces were routed. Karna then deployed weapon of Bhrigu, emitting thousands of arrows and killing innumerable Pandava warriors. Arjun and Krishna were unable to spot Yudhishthir, and they went to look for him entrusting the battlefield to Bhima.

Yudhishthir thought that Arjun was coming after killing Karna. On learning that Arjun had come without killing Karna, Yudhishthir became furious and said some very unpleasant words to Arjun and upbraided him. For the first time in life, Arjun felt so hurt and anguished that he rebuked and scolded Yudhishthir. Shri Krishna then established peace by narrating the entire sequence of events, and the two brothers hugged each other after that. Arjun then sat in his chariot and went to resume his fight against Karna. Urged on by Lord Krishna, Arjun pledged to kill Karna that very day.

Meanwhile, Bhima was fighting against the Kuru forces with prowess. Arjun drove towards him and destroyed thousands of arrows shot by the enemy forces. Bhima, thereafter, succeeded in killing Shakuni's horses and left him lifeless on the ground. Kaurava forces started fleeing but regained some courage on seeing Karna. Bhima, Dhrishtadhyumna, Satyaki, and Arjun proceeded to attack Karna and his

forces. A brutal battle followed, and the battlefield was soon covered with the bodies of soldiers. Arjun and Bhima together continued to afflict the Kuru soldiers. Karna succeeded in killing Satyaki's horses; Satyaki, in turn, killed Karna's son Susena. Burning with rage on seeing his son slain, Karna charged at Satyaki and Shikhandin. Seeing Panchals being slaughtered by Karna, Arjun proceeded with fury towards Karna, whereas Bhima protected him from behind.

A furious battle was raging between Karna on one side and Uttamaujus, Shikhandin and Dhrishtadhyumna on the other. Karna destroyed their bows, arrows, arrow cases, banners, and horses. Hearing the furious sound of Karna's arrows, the people thought that earth was being split open by Adhirath's son. Dushasana proceeded against Bhima, showering sharp arrows at him. Then, they fought a tumultuous battle, Dushasana succeeded in cutting Bhima's bow. Furious with rage, Bhima hurled his club at Dushasana, which carried him away 10 bow-lengths and the Kuru prince fell down in the battlefield dead.

Then, recollecting the pledge taken by him when Dushasana had dragged Draupadi in the Kuru Assembly and had tried to disrobe her, Bhima broke his arms and hurled these down. Bhima thereafter fulfilled the vow taken 14 years back; he cut open the breast of Dushasana and drank his warm blood. The people all around felt frightened and repulsive at that point. After that, Bhima spoke in a loud voice, "We were poisoned in an attempt to kill us, we were sent to a wax house to burn us in the fire, our kingdom was snatched through a deceitful game of dice. Our royal spouse, Draupadi was dragged and dishonoured in Kuru Assembly, we were sent to the forest for thirteen years, and our kingdom was not given back to us as per the terms of the wager when we returned after thirteen years of exile. Our father died early. Dhritarashtra and his sons never let the Pandava brothers know about happiness! Today, I have fulfilled one pledge whereas Duryodhana is yet to be slaughtered by me!"

At that point, 10 of Dushasana's brothers attacked Bhima at that time. Bhima killed all of them with his golden flat-edged sharp arrows. Shalya then reminded Karna that he had pledged to kill Arjun that day. Two valiant heroes of unmatched prowess, Karna and Arjun, then stood face to face determined to kill each other. In response to a question from Karna, Shalya, his charioteer, replied that if Arjun happened to kill Karna, he would make every possible effort to slay Arjun by way of revenge. In response to a similar question by Arjun, his charioteer Shri Krishna replied that Karna would never be able to kill him and that Arjun would be able to avenge the insult to Draupadi and murder of Abhimanyu by sending Karna that day to Yama's abode. Then, the two heroes attacked each other with great fury and speed.

Both these mighty heroes fought like brave Indra, using their arrows like thunderbolts. Karna at first pierced Arjun and Arjun wounded Karna thereafter. Then some of Arjun's arrows were struck down by Karna. Shri Krishna was furious and warned Arjun to fight with superior ability. For the good of the world and for killing Karna, Arjun deployed the invincible weapon of Brahma. Karna, however, baffled this weapon with his effulgent arrows and succeeded in wounding Arjun and Shri Krishna. Enraged Arjun shot sharp shafts at Karna and Shalya. Then suddenly Arjun twanged his Gandiva and pulled the string hard, and the string suddenly broke. Karna injured Arjun by shooting several sharp arrows. Swiftly restringing his bow, Arjun violently pierced Shalya's armour and wounded Karna.

The incredible battle was then fought between Arjun and Karna. Karna shot a dreadful, snake-headed blazing shaft at Arjun aiming at severing Arjun's head. Shri Krishna pressed the chariot five fingers deep in the ground to save Arjun. As a result, the serpent arrow just missed Arjun's head and struck his gorgeous looking diadem, which had been presented to him by Indra himself. Arjun was red with anger and shame. He then shot innumerable arrows, which smashed into pieces Karna's armour and pierced him at vital points causing unbearable pain. Blood started oozing out of those wounds, and broad-chested Karna looked like a mountain covered with Palas and Kapok trees, which yield flowers of a blood-red colour. Karna's fated hour had arrived, and as had been foretold, the left wheel of his chariot sank into the ground. At the same time, the weapon which was earlier given by Parashuram also lost its lustre. Karna could not bear these disasters and got extremely upset.

Even though shaken to his very soul, Karna displayed immense strength and determination. He wounded Arjun with his sharp shafts and baffled Arjun's arrows in the air. Krishna then encouraged Arjun, saying that he should use better weapons. Then, Arjun took out a deadly divine weapon and just as he was going to shoot, the wheel of Karna's chariot further sank in the mud. Karna was deeply perturbed on account of this mishap, remembering the curse of the Brahman. He jumped down to the ground to lift the wheel of his chariot up. Karna cried aloud telling Arjun to wait till he lifted the sunken wheel of his chariot. He reminded Arjun of the dharma of a Kshatriya and not to strike at an enemy when a disaster overtook him. Arjun hesitated for a while.

Shri Krishna intervened to say that a person, who indulged in adharma all his life suddenly remembered dharma, and righteousness when he himself was in danger. Shri Krishna spoke thus: Where had his sense of righteousness and fair play gone when he, Duryodhana, and Dushasana dragged Draupadi by the hair to the Kuru Assembly when she was attired in a single cloth? Where had

his sense of justice and uprightness gone when Dharmaputra was deprived of his kingdom through a rigged game of dice planned by Shakuni, Duryodhana, and Karna. Was any dharma observed when with his active support, Duryodhana refused to give back his kingdom to Dharmaraj Yudhishthir in violation of his pledge and conditions of the wager after he had come back from exile? Where had dharma gone when the plot to kill all Pandavas by burning them in the wax palace had been hatched? Where had his dharma gone when young Abhimanyu was attacked from all sides with multiple weapons? Was it righteous to attack Abhimanyu from all sides and also from behind whereas dharma prescribed and endorsed only one to one fight?

Thus accosted by Janardan, Karna hung down his head in shame. With his lips trembling in anger, he lifted his bow and started fighting with Arjun. Arjun shot Agneya Astra at Karna who countered it with his Varuna weapon, creating clouds all around. Arjun then scattered those clouds using Vayavya weapon. Karna then shot an effulgent arrow-like Indra's thunderbolt at Arjun, and he reeled under pain for some time. Availing this opportunity a car-warrior Vrisha leapt down from his chariot and tried to disengage the wheel of Karna's chariot from underneath the earth. He tried his best but did not succeed in extricating it. After recovering from his unbearable pain, Arjun took up his *Anjalika* arrow, which was fatal, like the rod of Death. Before shooting that Arjun struck down Karna's standard bearing the emblem of an elephant-rope gleaming with gold, pearls, and diamonds. Arjun then shot *Anjalika* arrow and discharged it from his infallible Gandiva at Karna. In a split second, this weapon cut Karna's head in the afternoon of the 17th day of the war. Blood started gushing out of Karna's body, which had arrows stuck all over. With great joy, lord Krishna and Arjun blew their conches.

After Karna's death, Kuru soldiers were highly demoralized and started taking to their heels. Duryodhana, with tears trickling down from his eyes, sighed again and again in deep agony. Shalya approached Duryodhana and told him about all the details how wonderfully well Karna had battled that day against Arjun. Krishna and Arjun then drove up to Yudhishthir and informed him about the death of Karna. Yudhishthir applauded Arjun and Shri Krishna. Yudhishthir went to see the bodies of Karna and his sons, who were slain in the battle. Sanjay ran to give all the details to Dhritarashtra and also blamed him for the dreadful destruction. He reported that great destruction was brought about while Arjun and Karna fought against each other just as had happened when Shri Ram had slain Ravana (8/5/53).

In response to a request from Dhritarashtra, Sanjay recounted which great kings and warriors had been killed in that most destructive war. He recollected that from Kuru side, Bhishma Pitamah, Dronacharya and Karna had been killed.

Jayadratha, king of Sindhu-Sauvira, sons and brothers of Duryodhana, had been killed; Bhagadatta was sent to Yama's abode by Arjun and Bhurishrava was slain by Satyaki. Sanjay further reported that Bhima killed Dushasana and many other brave sons of Dhritarashtra; Abhimanyu sent the king of Koshal to Yama's abode; Bhima slew Bahilka and Satyaki killed Bhurishrava. Pandava forces had killed innumerable other warriors, who were fighting on behalf of Kauravas. Sanjay then recollected names of warriors who had been killed on the side of Pandavas. He recounted that Bhishma had slain Malavas and Panchals in large numbers. Drona had killed Satyajit, Drupada and Virat, along with their mighty forces. Six Kuru warriors attacking from all sides had slain valiant Abhimanyu. Kuru forces had also killed Senavindu, Dhrishtaketu, Satyadhari and Suketu. Kuru warriors sent these and many other warriors, fighting on behalf of Pandavas, to the abode of Yama. On hearing these details of mass destruction, the Kuru king plunged in deep sorrow, and he repented for not preventing the war in time.

CHAPTER 41

Shalya became the chief commander of Kauravas; Yudhishthir killed him in the battle

When Karna died, Duryodhana's grief and anguish were unlimited. Kripacharya was deeply moved; he said that, stirred by ambition and greed of Duryodhana, a very great burden was placed on friends and relatives. They laid down their lives without complaining. The only course left for Duryodhana was to negotiate peace with the Pandavas. Even at that moment of deep despair and unlimited grief, Duryodhana did not like this suggestion. Duryodhana said that the time for negotiating peace had gone past very far. He told Kripa that he did not wish to save his life after losing most of his friends and well-wishers. Duryodhana could not hope to enjoy any sovereignty after losing almost all his brothers and relatives. By surrendering at this stage, Duryodhana would only invite the contempt of the world. The surviving Kuru forces cheered these words of Duryodhana. They supported his point of view and accepting the suggestion of Ashwatthama; they selected Shalya as the supreme commander of the surviving Kuru forces.

In the morning of the 18th day after the outbreak of war, Shalya arrayed his forces in such a manner that single combats were avoided and they went to the battlefield vowing support to each other. The Pandavas likewise arrayed their forces, and a dreadful battle began once more. Bhima and Arjun slaughtered many

Kuru warriors and blew their conches. Yudhishthir launched an attack against Shalya, whereas Dhrishtadhyumna and Shikhandin supported him from behind. The Kaurava army was demoralized and shattered. Shalya commanded his charioteer to drive him straight towards Yudhishthir. A furious fight followed. Everybody was astonished to watch how Yudhishthir, known for his gentleness, could fight with such fury.

The dreadful carnage continued. Bhima killed Shalya's charioteer and his horses. Shalya and Yudhishthir exchanged many arrows; finally, Yudhishthir succeeded in severing Shalya's standard. Shalya, supported by Kuru forces, intensified his attack on Yudhishthir. Satyaki, Bhima, Nakul and Sahadev came to Yudhishthir's aid and launched a joint attack against Shalya. Duryodhana felt encouraged to see that Shalya did not let them make any progress against him.

Meanwhile, Arjun and Ashwatthama were engaged in combat and exchanged many arrows. Arjun succeeded in killing Ashwatthama's horses. Dhrishtadhyumna and Duryodhana separately engaged in battle and at one stage, Duryodhana had to be rescued by his brothers. After that, for sometime, Kuru forces had the upper hand.

Yudhishthir was enraged to see Shalya slaughtering his troops. He attacked Shalya with full force and asked his nephews Nakul and Sahadev to guard the wheels of his chariot. Yudhishthir then announced that he would either slay Shalya or lay down his own life in the battle. He commanded that his chariot be filled with potent weapons, Satyaki should guard against the right and Dhrishtadhyumna against the left. Yudhishthir commanded that let Arjun guard his rear and Bhima defend his van. Blowing their conches, Pandavas proceeded to attack Shalya. Proud of his prowess, Shalya poured a shower of arrows on Yudhishthir. Bhima was engaged in battle with Duryodhana. Dhrishtadhyumna resisted attacks from Shakuni. Bhima killed the charioteer of Duryodhana and Ashwatthama hurried to his aid.

Yudhishthir fought against Shalya and his forces in an exceptional and unprecedented manner. He killed warriors, elephants, and horses in thousands. Then they both exchanged sharp arrows and wounded each other. When blood oozed out of their wounds, they looked like Kimshuk trees blooming in the forest. Shalya then severed Yudhishthir's bow, but he continued the combat taking another one. Yudhishthir slayed Shalya's charioteer and horses. Ashwatthama provided him with another chariot. The king of Madra Desh then succeeded in killing Yudhishthir's horses; however, Bhima severed Shalya's bow. To Duryodhana's delight, Shalya that day fought against his own Pandava nephews with great ability and prowess.

Red with anger, Yudhishthir took a golden celestial spear and hurled it fiercely at Shalya. Cutting through Shalya's armour and tearing through his vital organs and his broad chest, the spear entered the earth. Shalya's body was drenched in blood, and he fell down dead on the earth. His breast was cloven; his weapons were cast asunder, but his royal looks did not desert him even at that time. Yudhishthir wanted to conclude the war that day; therefore, fighting a ferocious battle, he slaughtered all of Kaurava warriors who came in his way. After getting almost 11 Akshauhini of army slaughtered, sorely wounded Duryodhana was left virtually alone in the battlefield. With mace in hand, Duryodhana walked towards a lake to cool his wounds. He thought that Vidur's prediction of a complete disaster had proved correct. Other than Duryodhana, the only Kauravas surviving were Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman, as they had gone in search of Duryodhana. On not finding Duryodhana anywhere, his surviving brothers attacked Bhima who, in retaliation, killed them. Shakuni led an attack against Sahadev and got his own neck severed with a sharp arrow. Sahadev killed Shakuni's son Uluka also.

CHAPTER 42

Balaram returned from his pilgrimage along the banks of Sarasvati to watch the mace battle between Duryodhana and Bhima

Meanwhile, Yuyutsu realizing that he was the only surviving son of Dhritarashtra, obtained permission from Yudhishthir to return to Hastinapur with the ladies of Dhritarashtra's household. Sanjay was running from the battlefield to report the unfortunate events to Dhritarashtra. Satyaki was about to kill Sanjay also when Vyas arrived and insisted that he be allowed to go free. Sanjay then removed his armour, surrendered his weapons and, thereafter, he left the battlefield. On the way, he met Duryodhana, who was standing alone depressed and was unable to speak. After some time, he asked Sanjay to tell his father Dhritarashtra that using his power of illusion and creating a room for himself by solidifying water, Duryodhana had entered the Dvaipayan Lake. A little later, Ashwatthama, Kripa, and Kritavarman also came there looking for Duryodhana. They felt anguished and grief-stricken on hearing that severely wounded Duryodhana had entered the lake. Sanjay then went ahead and briefed Dhritarashtra about the demise of Shalya, and that wounded Duryodhana was hiding in Dvaipayan lake. Vidur then met Yuyutsu, who was bringing back the ladies of the royal household.

The formal war had thus come to an end with the defeat of Kauravas and victory of Pandavas. However, realizing that no long-lasting peace could prevail until Duryodhana was killed, Yudhishthir and his brothers went in search of Duryodhana. Not able to find him anywhere they came back to their Camp. They then asked some hunters to act as spies and inform them if they spotted Duryodhana anywhere. Meanwhile, the hunters heard the three surviving Kauravas: Ashwatthama, Kripa, and Kritavarman talking to Duryodhana, who was hiding inside the lake. They were requesting Duryodhana to come out and resume the fight with Pandavas again. Duryodhana said that he was healing his wounds, and after that, he would join them in fighting the enemy. However, Ashwatthama assured Duryodhana that before the dawn of next day, he would kill all the Pandavas. The spies after that went and reported these facts to Yudhishthir.

Taking his brothers and his forces along, Yudhishthir came to that lake intending to slay Duryodhana. The three warriors silently left after informing Duryodhana about the arrival of Pandavas. Yudhishthir challenged Duryodhana to come out of his hiding and fight like a Kshatriya. Duryodhana then responded that he was resting, leaving Yudhishthir to enjoy his triumph and the fruits of sovereignty as he had no desire for a kingdom. Yudhishthir then rebuked Duryodhana that he was not willing to give an inch of land and after having lost himself, why he wanted to make a gift of earth. Yudhishthir then reminded Duryodhana of all the atrocities piled on the Pandavas and attempts made to kill them deceitfully by Duryodhana. Stung on being chastised by Yudhishthir in this manner, Duryodhana responded that he was weaponless and chariot-less, but he would come out and fight if Pandavas agree to fight one by one.

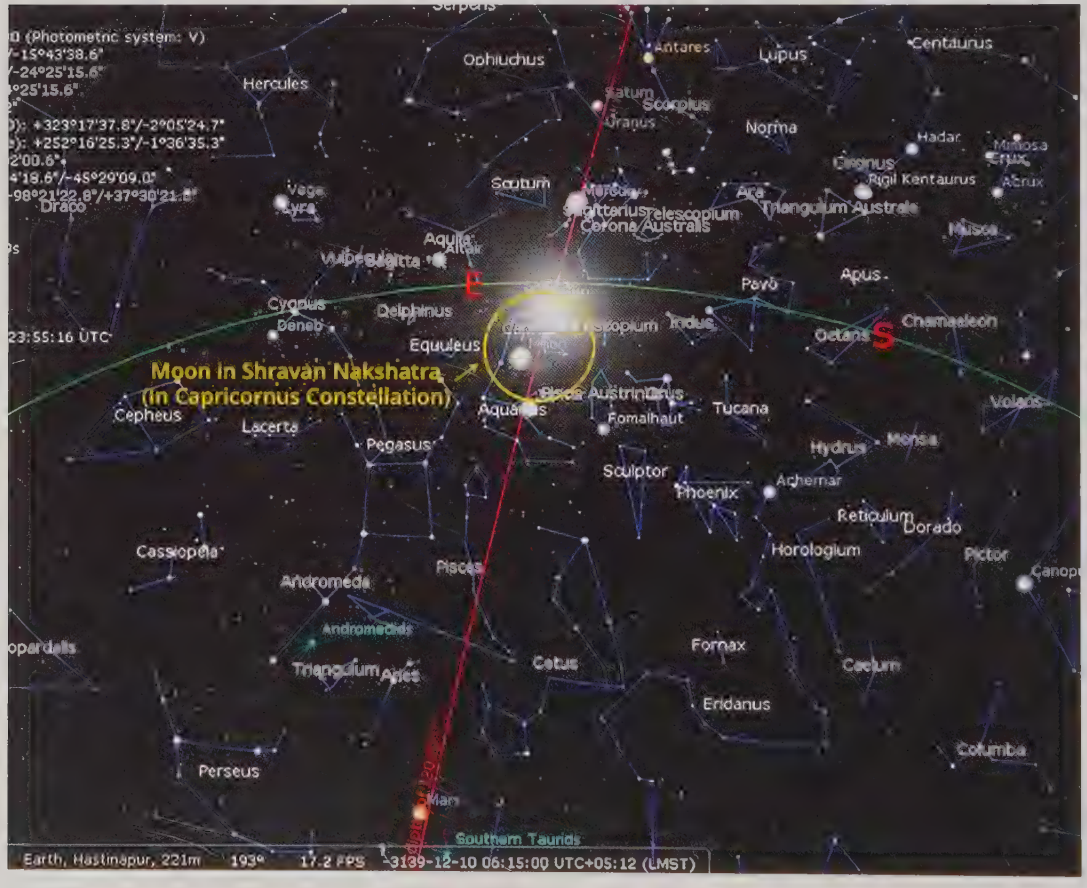
Yudhishthir told him that he could fight a single Pandava of his choice with a weapon of his choice and if he won, he would regain his kingdom. Krishna reprimanded Yudhishthir for making such rash promises. Duryodhana wanted to fight with a club, and Krishna advised that Bhima should fight against him. Duryodhana also wanted to engage in the mace battle with Bhima. Yudhishthir then addressed Bhima, saying that he had killed so many warriors and that he should kill Duryodhana as well. Recollecting the various wrongs committed by Duryodhana and the way Draupadi was dishonoured in Kuru assembly and remembering his own pledge of killing Duryodhana, Bhima then challenged him to the mace battle.

When that fierce encounter was about to take place, Shri Krishna's brother Balaram came there and said that 42 days had passed since he left home for pilgrimage.

चत्वारिंशदहानयद्य द्वे च मे नि:सृतस्य वै ।
पुष्येण सम्प्रयातोऽस्मि श्रवणे पुनरागत: ।।
शिष्ययोर्वै गदायुद्धं द्रष्टुकामोऽस्मि माधव ।। 9/34/6 ।।

Meaning: Balaram came back after 42 days. He had left in Pushya constellation and came back in Shravan Nakshatra. He further added that he was desirous of seeing the mace battle between his two disciples.

This happened to be 10th December, 3139 BCE, when Moon was in Shravan Nakshatra. This was precisely 42 days after Balaram had left on 29th October, 3139 BCE, in Pushya Nakshatra as he did not want to take any side in the battle between Kauravas and Pandavas. See the Skyview generated using Stellarium software.



Sky-view from Kurukshetra (30° N 77° E) on 10th December, 3139 BCE, when Moon was near Shravan Nakshatra in Capricornus; sky shot of Stellarium

Before hearing the details of mace battle between Bhima and Duryodhana, Janamejaya requested Vaishampayan to give details of pilgrim centres visited by Balaram. Vaishampayan narrated the details saying that after serving sumptuous food to Brahmanas and after giving in charity enormous wealth, Balaram had started his visit to pilgrimage centres along Sarasvati River (8/35-38) in Pushya Nakshatra. He also carried a lot of wealth for giving away in charity to poor and to Brahmanas in various pilgrimage centres. He started his journey from Prabhas and concluded it at Kurukshetra after 42 days in Shrawan Nakshatra:

1. Baladeva first visited Prabhas (Located in Gujarat), where Sarasvati joined the sea; Balaram bathed there in Sarasvati River.
2. He then went to Vinasana (in Rajasthan), where Sarasvati had disappeared (8/37/1). This place has been identified with Kalibangan (Bhardwaj, 1986, P: 20-43).
3. After that, he visited Shubhumika, situated on the banks of flowing Sarasvati. The spot had many Apsaras and beautiful sporting gardens for them.
4. Next, he went to Gargasrota, Sankha and Nagadhanvan and donated immense wealth at all these places.
5. Then, he travelled to Naimish Aranya (in UP & MP) where Sarasvati had turned in an easterly direction. After benefitting many hermits and sages with its pure water, Sarasvati again turned in a westerly direction.
6. Balaram visited Saptasarasvata where all seven forms of Sarasvati used to flow together. The flora of this place has been described in detail. Its palaeobotanic evidence has been provided in the next chapter.
7. Next, he visited hermitages of Sage Rusangu, Sage Artisena, and Hermit Dalbhya Baka.
8. After that, he went to that part of Sarasvati where Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishth occupied bathing places on opposite banks of Sarasvati.
9. Next, Balaram visited the bathing places of Kartikeya, Kubera, and of Parashuram.
10. Balaram also travelled to the bathing place of Sarasvata, who was the son of River Sarasvati and Seer Dadhichi.
11. Then Balaram went to the bathing place of the daughter of an ascetic known as Seer Kuni Gargeya. At this place, Balaram learnt the details of war being

fought in Kurukshetra and about the death of Shalya. The sages told him about the rewards of giving up one's life in Kurukshetra. The hermits narrated in detail how that land was ploughed and nurtured for a long time by the Kuruk king.

12. After that Balaram visited the hermitage, where Lord Vishnu had earlier performed penances and subsequently it was sanctified by the hermitess, who was Sage Shandilya's daughter. From there, Balaram Ji walked towards the Himalayan hills; there he saw the holiest place known as Plakshaprasravan, from where Sarasvati had originated.

13. It is, thus, clear that Balaram had started his pilgrimage along Sarasvati from the place where it joined the sea, and then he went right up to the area of its origin in the Himalayas.

14. On Plakshaprasravan hill, in Karpavanam ashram, he met Sage Narad, who narrated to him the comprehensive details of the battle in Kurukshetra and advised him to go there quickly if he wanted to see the mace battle between Bhima and Duryodhana.

After that, Balaram came down from Plakshaprasravan hill and sang praises of Sarasvati, which was in the process of becoming ephemeral, disappearing at some places and reappearing at others. He said –

सरस्वती सर्वनदीषु पुण्या; सरस्वती लोकसुखावहा सदा
सरस्वतीं पराप्य जनाः सुदुष्कृताः; सदा न शोचन्ति परत्र चेह च (9/54/39)

Meaning: Sarasvati was the most sacred amongst all rivers. It remains ever engaged in the welfare of entire humanity. After getting purified in Sarasvati waters, a human being is rid of the sins of this world and of the other world. He thus also gets rid of all his worries.

Scientific evidence has proved that such references to Sarasvati in Mahabharat relate to 3000 BCE: These references to Sarasvati in Mahabharat to sometime vanishing and again reappearing; sometimes flowing and another time dried up; sometimes seen in the form of lakes and another time flowing sub-terranean, firmly establish the link of Mahabharat era with 3000 BCE. This conclusion has been arrived at based on multi-disciplinary scientific evidence. During last hundred years, geological, archaeological, hydrological, ecological research reports and remote sensing images taken by LANDSAT (USA), IRS-1C (India), French SPOT Satellites (France) and ERSS (Europe), have provided scientific evidence about the

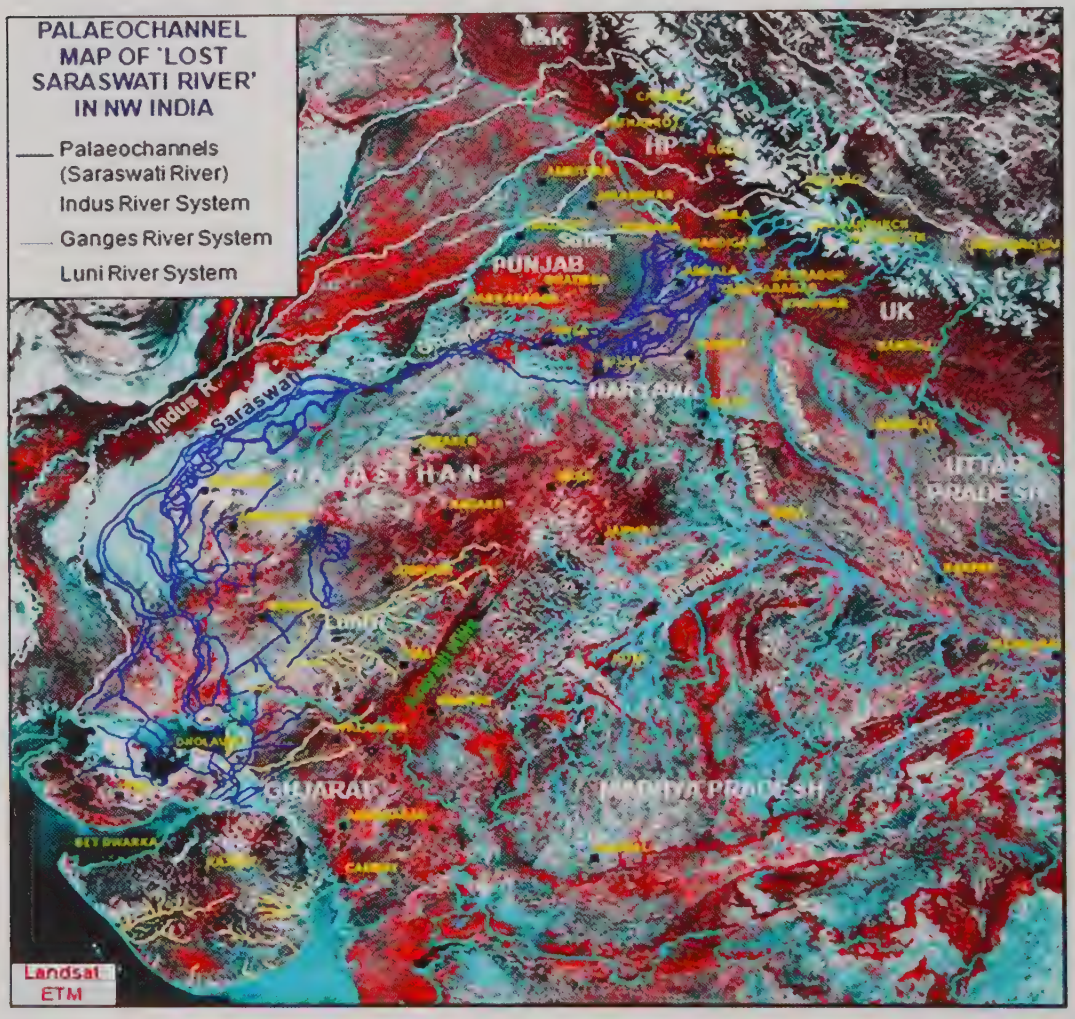
flow, migration and decay of Sarasvati River. This evidence relates to different phases of Sarasvati during the last 12000 years that is since the beginning of current Holocene.

References to Sarasvati in Vedas and Epics help in determining the dates of different phases of this mighty river system – In Rigveda, the name of Sarasvati appears 72 times. It is described as a mighty river flowing from the mountain to the sea, eulogized as Ambitame, Naditame and Devitame; that is best of mothers, best of rivers and best of goddesses (Hymns of the Rigveda by Griffith, 2/41/16). Astronomical references of Rigveda have been related to 7000 BCE to 5500 BCE (Ashok Bhatnagar, 2012). River Sarasvati finds mention in Ramayan as well; its astronomical dating relates it to the period 5100 BCE (Saroj Bala, 2019). Astronomical dates of planetary references in Mahabharat, supported by archaeological evidence, fix the year of war in 3139 BCE (Saroj Bala in Dialogue Vol 18).

Satellite images taken by LANDSAT, IRS-1C, SPOT Satellites, and ERSS have traced the route of palaeo-channels of ancient Sarasvati river system, which corroborate the references in Vedas and Epics –

Dr J.R. Sharma and Dr B.K. Bhadra (of ISRO, Jodhpur Center) have explained that the Vedic Sarasvati river system was flowing with full majesty around 6000 BCE, like the modern-day Indus system. Their conclusions were based on optical satellite data and microwave data, duly validated with information from archaeology, sedimentology and hydrology. This mighty river system covered a distance of more than 1500 kilometres from Himalaya to the Arabian Sea and had Yamuna and Sutlej as its tributaries. Due to tectonic movements and several fault lines, slowly the Yamuna diverted eastward to join Ganga and Sutlej moved westward to join Indus through Beas. Thus, Sarasvati was a mighty river in 7000 BP (that is before present), during Ramayan era, but by 5000 BP it had become non-perennial and had become ephemeral at several places. Presently, Sutlej and Yamuna are the two perennial rivers whereas Sarasvati is ephemeral, visible in the form of palaeo-channels, trapped underground waters, ponds, and lakes. Some of its palaeo-channels, like Ghaggar, Hakra and Luni, still provide an outlet to flood/rain waters (Valdiya, 2017).

27: Satellite image of lost Sarasvati River in Northwest India



Satellite image of Sarasvati palaeo-channels (Courtesy: J.R. Sharma and B.K. Bhadra, ISRO, Jodhpur (in Historicity of Vedic and Ramayan Eras, 2012)

The dry phase started around 5500 BP, and by Mahabharat time, that is 5000 BP, Sarasvati had disappeared at some places, reappeared at others and was flowing sub-terranean at some others. Despite such diversion of tributaries of Sarasvati, the mighty river kept on flowing with all its might because the period around 7000-6000 BP belonged to the mid-Holocene Climatic optima with very rich monsoon rainfall. Huge water volumes were flowing through Drishadvati (Chautang), Sarasvati (Ghaggar, Hakra, and Nara) before discharging into the Arabian Sea until

about 5500 BP (Kar et al. 2004). After that, the process of weakening of Monsoons had started. Interpretation of satellite imagery, coupled with drilling data, has revealed that the desert region was riddled with multiple fault lines, making the straight flow of rivers and streams almost impossible.

That is the reason that, while travelling along the course of Sarasvati from its mouth at sea in Prabhaskshetra, Balaram saw a plough shaped bend at Vinashan, where Sarasvati had disappeared into the desert sands. Subsequently, Sarasvati reappeared at several places like Udapan. After that, Balaram was able to recognize the river through underground currents (antahsalila) by noticing moisture and greenery in the soil. One needs to take note of the fact that, although, Sarasvati had lost its water at several places, it was still flowing right up to the sea, at least during the rainy season (Shalya Parva 33, 89 and 70). Thus, Mahabharat paints a picture of Sarasvati which had become sub-terranean at many points in the sandy desert.

Sarasvati Basin: A land of Recurrent Tectonic Upheavals - It is more than evident that the vast expanse of land traversed by Sarasvati and its tributaries had repeatedly experienced tectonic convulsions. It was severely shaken by earthquakes of enormous magnitude; resulting in the sinking of land in some parts and rising in other regions. It was therefore quite natural that the River and its tributaries deviated, shifted, swung, and swerved from their original courses (Valdiya, 2017). That is the explanation for Balaram's surprise at seeing Sarasvati turning towards the east in Naimish Aranya and then suddenly turn towards the West. It is believed by the geologists that there was an earthquake of great magnitude in around 4700 years BP (+/- 300) which resulted in the collapse of massive fortification wall of Kalibangan in Vinashan area. Again, there was a massive earthquake in 4500 years BP, which resulted in the collapse of urban Harappan settlement of Dholavira (Bisht 1991, Valdiya 2017).

Geological and hydrological studies - It has been observed that the sub-surface drainages (palaeo-channels) of lost Sarasvati in the Rann area rejuvenated after the Bhuj earthquake of 26th January 2001. Similar phenomena, like a sudden spurt of sub-surface water oozing at Kalayat village in Jind district of Haryana had been observed in December 2005, after earthquakes in the area. Eminent Geologist, Dr A.R. Chaudhri carried out intensive field investigations around Kaithal and Kurukshetra districts in Haryana. Based on the size and shape of the sediments, their dense mineral content, the geomorphic setting of the terrain, its archaeological disposition, and analysis of satellite imagery, Dr Chaudhri concluded that a major river (Sarasvati) flowed through Haryana in the recent geological past. This river carried sediments from the higher Himalayan areas (Chaudhri, 2016). Dr Chaudhri also concluded that the enormous productivity of the alluvial plains, in Haryana,

Punjab, and parts of Rajasthan, is attributable to the fact that these were laid down by the mighty trans-Himalayan River Sarasvati. The palaeo-channels and related deeper aquifers of this great river system are still getting recharged. This paleo mega River named Sarasvati is not flowing today, but a truncated, buried channel approximating its past grandeur exists.

Map of Haryana showing the location of sites where signatures of the presence of a mega-river have been identified (after Chaudhri, 2016)

Discovery of a large number of Vedic Harappan archaeological sites in Sarasvati basin - Nearly 2378 settlements of Harappan Civilization have been identified and excavated in the land watered by the ancient Sarasvati River System. These include the world-famous sites of Banawali, which is famous for the world's first Acropolis; Kalibangan, which is known for its layout and designed floor tiles. There is Lothal, having the world's oldest dockyard; Dholavira, which is having the world's oldest huge Rock-cut reservoir and the oldest inscription. Excavated sites of Bhirrana and Rakhigarhi etc. relate the Sarasvati civilization to 8000 BP to 5000 BP (Dikshit, 2014 & Bisht 1991). From these sites has been found evidence of 7000-5000 years' old civilization producing wheat and rice, copper arrowheads, terracotta items, jewellery made of beads, semi-precious stones & gold, boats and anchors,

drainage systems and warehouses, inscriptions and seals, and many more samples and artefacts. All these give glimpses into the civilization that flourished along the banks of the mighty river system named Sarasvati.

Report of the Expert Committee constituted by the Ministry of Water Resources, under the chairmanship of Dr K. S. Valdiya - In Jan. 2016, this Committee was formed to review the available information critically on palaeo-channels and to give recommendations on various issues related to water resource development vis-à-vis the palaeo-channels of India. The Committee submitted its report on 15th October, 2016. The Committee reported that in the northern Haryana, the Ghaggar-Patialiwali rivulets provided pathways to the western branch of the Himalayan born River Sarasvati (paleo Sutlej) and through the former courses of the Markanda and Sarsuti rivulets, flowed the eastern branch of the Himalayan river Sarasvati (paleo Yamuna). The two branches combined 25 km south of Patiala, then flowed through the extraordinarily wide channel of the Ghaggar-Hakra-Nara and emptied into the Gulf, which is today known as the Arabian Sea. On the banks of Ghaggar at Sirsa, stands an ancient fort named Sarsuti, the name recalling the rivulet Sarsuti that joins the Ghaggar at Pehowa in Kurukshetra district. The Committee concluded that it would, therefore, be rewarding to undertake measures to recharge the multitude of palaeo-channels of the Sarsuti–Ghaggar–Hakra domain in Haryana and adjoining Rajasthan. These efforts would also sustain the continued flow of underground currents that flow slowly but surely (K. S. Valdiya).

Let us now revert to Balaram's visit to Sapta-Sarasvat and the description of its plants. In chapter 37 of Shalya Parva, it has been said that, after bathing in those sacred pilgrimage centres along the banks of Sarasvati River and after giving wealth in charity, Balaram visited that foremost of tirthas named Sapta-Sarasvat. There, he saw various kinds of trees on the banks of the river.

सरस्वतीतीर्थवरं नाना द्विजगणायुतम् ।
बदरेङ्गुदकाश्मर्यप्लक्षाश्वत्थविभीतकैः ।। शल्य पर्व, 61/37/9।।
कङ्कोलैश्च पलाशैश्च करीरैः पीलुभिस्तथा ।
सरस्वतीतीर्थरुहैस्तरुभिर्वीविधैस्तथा ।। शल्य पर्व, 62/37/9
करूषकवरैश्चैव बिल्वैराम्रातकैस्तथा ।
अतिमुक्तकषण्डैश्च पारिजातैश्च शोभितम् ।। शल्य पर्व, 63/37/9 ।।
कदलीवनभूयिष्ठं दृष्टीकान्तं मनोहरम् ।
वाय्वम्बूफलपर्णादैर्दन्तोलूखलिकैरपि ।। शल्य पर्व, 64/37/9 ।।

Meaning: Adored by many sages, Balaram visited those pilgrimage centres on the banks of Sarasvati. Then he reached Sapta-Sarasvat pilgrimage centre. The place was full of trees like Badari, Inguda, Plaksha, Ashwattha, Vibhitika, Kakola, Palasha, Karira, Pilu, Karushakas, Bilvas, Amratakas, Atimuktas, Kashandas, Parijatas and so on. It abounded in most beautiful forests of Kadali (Plantains). The place was sanctified with the presence of the ascetics, who lived on water, fruits and leaves. The place resounded with the chanting of the Vedas.

RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT PLANTS SEEN BY BALARAM AT PILGRIM PLACES SITUATED ALONG SARASVATI RIVER, DESCRIBED IN SHALYA PARVA

Sr. No.	Sanskrit name of plant in Mahabharat	Botanical name	Common English and Indian names	Shalya Parva / Sub-chapter / verse number
1.	Amrataka / आम्रातक	*Spondia spinnata*	Wild Mango, Aambada,	IX./37/63
2.	Aswattha / अश्वत्थ	*Ficus religiosa*	Pipal, Pimpalla, Bodhi,	IX./37/61
4.	Badari / बदरी	*Zizyphus mauritiana*	Ber, Bora	IX./37/61
5.	Bilwa / बिल्वा	*Aegle marmelos*	Bel, Bael	IX./37/63
6.	Inguda / इङ्गुद	*Balanites roxburghii*	Ingudi, Hingoli, Hingun	IX./7/61
7.	Palasha / पलाश	*Butea monosperma*	Kinshuk, Forest Flame,	IX./37/62
8.	Karira / करीरा	*Capparis decidua*	Khair, Kair	IX./37/62
9.	Parijata / पारिजात	*Nyctanthesar bortristis*	Khurasli, Harshingar	IX./37/63
10.	Plantains / कदली	*Musa balbisiana*	Banana, Kela, Kadali	IX./37/64
11.	Vibhitaka / विभीतक	*Terminalia bellirica*	Behaddaa, Bibheeta	IX./37/61

PICTURES OF SOME PLANTS SEEN BY BALARAM AT PILGRIM PLACES SITUATED ALONG SARASVATI RIVER, DESCRIBED IN SHALYA PARVA

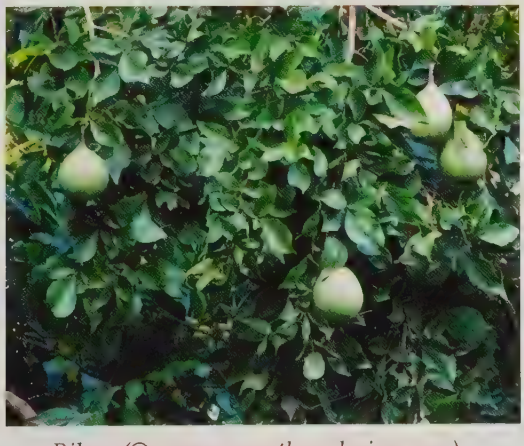
Badari (Jujube), (© modern plants & seeds)

Aswattha (Pipal), (© Osho News)

Inguda (© www.agrifarming.in)

Kadali / Plantains (© 123rf.com)

Parijata (© www.plantsguru.com)



Bilwa (© www.somathread.ning.com)

For the palaeobotanic evidence of the existence of some of these plants 5000 years back, reference may be made to Chapter 44 entitled 'Archaeo-botanical Studies place Mahabharat era around 3000 BCE & establish an inseparable link between the Harappan sites and references to plants in Mahabharat'.

CHAPTER 43

Bhima killed Duryodhana in the mace battle in the presence of Krishna and Balaram in Samantapanchak

After narrating the details of pilgrim places visited by Balaram with comprehensive information about the plants seen by him at several places on the banks of vanishing Sarasvati River, Vaishampayan resumed the account of the battle as was narrated by Sanjay to Dhritarashtra. Balaram was interested in watching the mace battle between Duryodhana and Bhima; he suggested that the battle should take place at Samantapanchak, since men dying there were assured of attaining heaven. Since both sides agreed; they all went there. Duryodhana roared out his challenge to Bhima. Bhima addressed Yudhishthir saying that after killing that wicked Duryodhana and breaking his body into hundred pieces, Bhima would place a garland of victory around Yudhishthir's neck. Bhima then reminded Duryodhana of his many misdeeds, his attempts at killing all the Pandavas with deceit and his shameful mistreatment of Draupadi. It was the time to avenge all those atrocities committed by him. Then, lifting his mace, the great Vikodra rushed towards Duryodhana, and the fierce battle had thus begun.

Both of them attacked each other with their maces, fought with fury and then rested for a while. They struck each other with terrible blows; both of them were severely wounded but then recovered quickly to resume their fight. They charged at each other like two angry bulls encountering each other. The strokes of their

maces produced sounds like those of thunder-bolts. Bhima performed various kinds of tricks; he moved in beautiful circles advancing and receding, he took different types of offensive and defensive positions, he went around his enemy but prevented Duryodhana from circumambulating him. Bhima then whirled his mace looking like Indra's thunderbolt and struck Duryodhana. Simultaneously Duryodhana also whirled his heavy adamantine mace and hit Bhima on the head. Spectators were surprised to see that Bhima did not even quake.

Red with rage, Bhima began to whirl his mace with fury and then struck Duryodhana on one of his sides. Stupefied at that blow the latter dropped down on earth, falling upon his knees. Pandavas roared with joy, but rising Duryodhana started breathing like a venomous snake. He then struck Bhima on his forehead, and he bled profusely. Furious Bhima then struck Duryodhana with his invincible iron mace, and he fell down like a gigantic Sal tree. Regaining his consciousness, Duryodhana attacked Bhimasen, who fell down and broke his armour. Arjun enquired from Shri Krishna, who between the two was likely to win. In response, Shri Krishna said that due to loose words uttered by Yudhishthir before the beginning of the mace-battle, the Pandavas were once again in danger of losing sovereignty. After practically gaining the victory in such an unprecedented fierce war, Yudhishthir had very foolishly staked Duryodhana's kingdom upon the success or defeat in that mace battle.

Shri Krishna reminded that when Duryodhana was humiliating Draupadi asking her to sit in his lap displaying his thighs shamelessly, Bhima had pledged that he would break the thighs of Duryodhana with his mace. The standard rule to be followed in a mace battle was not to hit below the belt, but Bhima would have to break that rule in order to redeem his pledge. Having heard Lord Krishna's words, Dhananjya struck his left thigh before the gaze of Bhima. Understanding that sign, Bhima started moving in circles with uplifted mace. By the repeated attacks of their maces, both of them were wounded very severely. Seeing the furious Bhima rushing towards him, Duryodhana jumped upwards to beguile Bhima. Red with rage, Bhima hurled his mace at the thighs of the Kuru king. That mace broke both the thighs of Duryodhana; he fell down helpless on the ground.

Bhima struck the head of Kuru king with his left foot, and then he announced that all the persons responsible for dragging Draupadi by the hair into the Kuru assembly, had been sent to the abode of Yama. Yudhishthir directed Bhima not to crush the head of the Kuru king with his foot as he was a king as well as a kinsman. Yudhishthir also tried to say some soothing words to Duryodhana, "O brother, you should not give way to anger and grief. Through your own fault, avarice, pride and foolishness this great calamity has befallen you, your brothers, sires, and companions. You are not to be pitied, but we shall have to carry on a miserable

existence, shorn of all our dear friends and kin". Balaram, on the other hand, admonished Bhima for hitting Duryodhana below the naval and, thus, violating the dharma of mace battle. He also criticized Krishna at that time for extending support to Bhima's action.

Shri Krishna pacified Baladeva saying that there was another dharma to be followed; when Duryodhana had shamelessly dishonoured Draupadi in Kuru Assembly, Bhima had vowed that he would break the thighs of Duryodhana with his mace. Moreover, noble Pandavas deserved to be supported as they were children of our father's sister, our natural friends, and greatly wronged and humiliated by the Kurus. Therefore, supporting them was their natural duty. Disagreeing with Krishna, Balaram left for Dwarka in his chariot. Feeling happy after vanquishing Duryodhana, Bhima saluted Yudhishthir and said that earth belonged to him and he could rule without any thorns. The survivors amongst Pandavas and Panchals appreciated Bhima saying that by good luck he had succeeded in killing sinful, shameless, unjust, and wicked Duryodhana and had succeeded in punishing him for all the heinous crimes committed by him.

Krishna asked everyone not to say anything against the mortally wounded man because Duryodhana invited his own end on account of his stupid, immoral deeds. Sitting on his haunches and supporting himself on his two arms, Duryodhana at that time assailed Shri Krishna saying, "O son of Kansa's slave you have no business to move with the princes. I saw you instigating Bhima to hit the mace at my thighs. Very cleverly you were pointing to Arjun your thighs but were actually indicating to Bhima to strike me below the naval which was against the laws of single combat. O Krishna, you neither have any shame nor any pity. You contrived the death of Bhishma by advising that Shikhandin be placed in front of Arjun knowing fully well that grandsire would not fight against a woman. You brought about the end of preceptor Dronacharya by making Yudhishthir speak a lie that Ashwatthama had been killed. It was you who had contrived to make Karan hurl the fatal spear at Ghatotkach instead of reserving it for Arjun. O, great sinner, it was you who had instigated Arjun to attack Karna when the wheel of his chariot had got stuck in the mud! Did you not make Jayadratha believe that the day was over and he was past danger and thus he was slain by Arjun?"

After pouring such denunciation against Janardan and feeling exhausted by the pain, Duryodhana fell prostrate. Shri Krishna admonished the Kuru king, saying he should not allow his anger to enhance his pain. "These were the misdeeds, sins and wicked actions of Duryodhana which had brought about such a tragic end for him. Krishna said that Bhishma and Drona had to die for Duryodhana's sins and due to his stubborn disobedience. Duryodhana, had committed countless crimes

and had hatched innumerable conspiracies against the Pandus; even though they had never harmed him! Krishna went on, saying, that it was Duryodhana, who had poisoned Bhima. through crookery and deception he had tried to burn all the Pandava brothers in the wax palace; through deceit, Duryodhana had defeated Yudhishthir in the game of dice, and then snatched his kingdom. Where was he when his brother-in-law Jayadratha tried to abduct Draupadi, the wife of his Pandava brothers when they were living in the forest? Shri Krishna reprimanded Duryodhana holding him responsible for slaying young Abhimanyu by attacking him from behind and from all sides throwing all rules of warfare to winds? What punishment can be too severe for the humiliation he had shamelessly inflicted on Draupadi in Kuru Assembly? "All the sinful deeds, which you are attributing to me and the Pandavas, are in reality perpetrated by you due to your own insatiable greed and sinful conduct," said Krishna.

Duryodhana reiterated that he had no regrets. While he lived, he enjoyed all the pleasures available to a sovereign, while dying he was going straight to heaven being a Kshatriya killed in battle. Sensing that Pandavas were a little disturbed on hearing Duryodhana's words, Shri Krishna reassured them that sometimes, to kill the Rakshasas and to kill those who support the ignoble deeds of Rakshasas, some shrewd and cunning methods had to be adopted. Hearing these words of Lord Krishna, Pandavas and Panchals felt happy. Blowing their conches, they started going towards their camps.

The Pandavas entered the deserted Camp of Duryodhana. Lord Krishna asked Arjun to dismount from the chariot along with his Gandiva, and then he dismounted himself. Suddenly the chariot was consumed by flames and was reduced to ashes. Everyone there was filled with wonder and awe. Shri Krishna then explained that the chariot had already been burnt by various celestial weapons, including the weapons of Brahma; only his presence had prevented it from getting reduced to ashes. Janardan congratulated Yudhishthir at his victory and told him that he had honoured his promise made to Yudhishthir of protecting Arjun during the war. King Yudhishthir then expressed his gratefulness to Krishna, saying that war was won only because of him.

CHAPTER 44

Archaeo-botanical Studies place Mahabharat around 3000 BCE & establish a link between the flora of Harappan sites and plants of Mahabharat era

A large number of plants have been mentioned in the Mahabharat text. Based on archaeo-botanical evidence, many of these could be believed as existing during the Mahabharat era, around 3000 BCE.

We find the mention of the *Vetasa* (willow; *Salix*) tree *in Vana Parva,* III.61.107), wherein it is said that a huge lake was covered with the trees of the willows. The reference to the *Vetasa* tree occurs again in the context of the Pandavas wandering in Badrika Ashram area and in Dvaita Forest area after having lost in the game of dice (III.155.41; III.174.23). It mentions that the *Vetasa* tree has a thousand branches. (*ibid.*, III.184.23a). In the same *Parva*, the tree has been mentioned again, as growing near the waters of the River Indus. (*ibid.*, III.296.43). These were indeed not the references to ordinary cane or rattan palm trees but referred to willow trees, which used to grow under the climatic conditions of 5000 years BP (Before Present).

During the excavation of the Mehrgarh region (Now in Pakistan), Lorenzo Constantini found that the pollens of the willow tree (*Salix*) could be found in the soil layers from Early Holocene to about 3000 BC. *(Costantini 2008:171-72; Allesandro Lentini 2000; Jarrige 2008*). Jarrige, citing the works of Costantini, noted that the results

of the pollen analysis show that from the beginning of the Mehrgarh occupation, till the 4th millennium BCE, 'the region was probably dominated by a semi-lacustrine or humid environment with riparian vegetation. It was characterized by *Populus*, *Salix*, *Fraxinus*, *Ulmus* and *Vitis*, associated in a typical hydrophytic complex, arranged in dense gallery forests'." *(Jarrige 2008:151)*. It may be noted here that the disappearance of the willow tree from the region was caused by the progressively increasing dryness and decreasing monsoon. This process had started from around 3500 BCE onwards and ultimately resulted in the complete draught leading to the demise of the Indus-Harappa civilization in northwest India *(Priyadarshi 2014)*.

The Sarasvati River, which had got cut off from the Himalayan glacial source of water-supply at about 6000 BCE (Rigveda 4/17/2-3), became rain-fed during the shift of monsoon from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea at about 5500 BCE and continued to flow well. Because of the monsoon shift, the northwest Indian region had a good growth of forests during this period and also it had kept the Sarasvati flowing well. However, after 3500 BCE, the Sarasvati became smaller and smaller until it completely got dried up by 2600 BCE (*Clift 2012: Abstract*). This matches the description of River Sarasvati in the *Mahabharat* text as a drying river; this was precisely the condition of the river between 3500 BCE and 2600 BCE. Hence the date *c.* 3000 BCE for Mahabharat era corroborates best with the dates derived from archaeo-astronomy, archaeo-botany and geological studies.

After these dates, willow tree pollens disappeared from northwest Indian plains from soil layers, implying that the willow tree became extinct in the region after 3000 BCE. (*Costantini; Jarrige 2008*). This extinction of the willow tree is understandable if we know the climate change taking place during that period. We know that after 3000 BCE, the region became extra drier (*Priyadarshi 2014*). The description of the *Vetasa* tree in the cited *verses* of the *Mahabharat* as growing in and around bodies of water like ponds, lakes and rivers, and also that it has a thousand branches exactly matches the description of the willow tree, and not the description of the reeds or the *Calamus rotang* cane. Hence the date of the *Mahabharat* period cannot be much later than 3000 BCE, the last time when *Vetasa* (willow, Salix) was present in the region.

Another plant which has excellent chronological discriminatory value is the plantain (banana, *Musa*). We find its mention in the context of Northwest Indian locations at several places in the *Mahabharat* text. For example, *Kadali that is Plaintain has been referred to in* Udyog Parva - V.13.2; V.109.10; Shalya Parva - IX.36.60; Sauptik Parva - X.11.6a; Stri Parva - XI.3.4, XI.17.1. The banana was not being grown in northern Indian sub-continent as it required an abundance of water for growth, which was not available. On the other hand, the oldest evidence of cultivated banana in South India dates back to 9,000 BCE, and it comes from Sri Lanka (*Kajale 1989*).

The Indian banana has seeds, and it is of two varieties—a thin small one called *Chiniya kela* and the other is bulbous called *Muthiya kela* (*mutika* plantain) in Bihari dialects where they grow in the plenty. These were the traditional cultivars of banana in India. Hence the people of India, particularly those living in Bihar, Bengal and Northwest India, who have been growing *Musa bulbisiana* (the thick large bulbous banana), generally referred to as plantain by many authors since ages.

The Indian bulbar banana was native of East and South India, but did not grow in north-western India until 5000 years back. This position is consistent with the fact that it requires heavy rainfall for its growth. During the Rig Vedic period also it did not grow in northwest India and we find no mention of this plant in the *Rig Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. However, when the Bay of Bengal Monsoons got shifted to the Arabian Sea, the climate of northwest India became favourable to the cultivation of the banana plants. Bananas (*Musa paradisiaca*) have also been identified as a common ceramic motif from the Mohenjo-Daro pottery (*Wheeler 1968; Marshall 1931*).

The phytolith samples of Kot Diji, examined by Madella, revealed the presence of the banana phytoliths (plant fossils) in this Indus-Sarasvati site at about 3300 BCE. (*Fuller 2001:342*). We can, therefore, conclude that by 3300 BCE, or about a couple of centuries before the Mahabharat era, the banana had reached in the north-western Indian territories. Hence, it may be very much expected that it had grown in abundance in the region during the *Mahabharat* period. Thus, the finding of *Kadali* as a common plant in the *Mahabharat* gives us the diagnosis that the *Mahabharat* generation lived in that region after 3300 BCE. The simultaneous presence of willow, which became extinct by 3000 BCE in the northwest area of South Asia, makes it easy for us to narrow down the date of *Mahabharat* to between 3300 BCE and 3000 BCE.

Now let us discuss another plant named Foxtail Millet, which was known as *Priyangu*. There is no archaeological evidence of this particular millet plant in Indus-Sarasvati archaeology before 2600 BCE. The word *Priyangu* as the name of a plant occurs several times in the *Mahabharat*. We need to make sure whether the *Priyangu* of the *Mahabharat* was Foxtail Millet or something else.

The name *Priyangu* has been applied to different plants at different times in Sanskrit literature available to us today. We find that the *Mahabharat* does not mention *Priyangu* as millet or food-grain plant, but uses this to mean an entirely different species of plant which has ornamental, cosmetic, and medicinal values, but which is undoubtedly not the Foxtail Millet. In the *Mahabharat, Priyangu* is a plant whose powder, extracts and paste were used as skin-ointment and as cosmetics by the beauticians and the physicians of those days. One verse mentions

the use of the powders and perfumes made from many flowers as well as the *Priyangu*. (Shanti Parva - 12.38.47). This means that *Priyangu*'s extract and powder forms were used as perfumery.

Another verse mentions that the *Priyangu,* sandalwood, and *Bilva* (*Aegle marmelos*) paste should be applied to the skin separately from the saffron pate (Anushasan Parva – 13.107.80). In still another verse, it has been said that the fragrant astringent, yellowish-red paste of the banyan tree's berries should be applied to the skin along with the paste of the *Priyangu (Anushasan Parva – 13.125.38).* The next line mentions the use of *Priyangu* and mustard pastes for removing rashes and patches of pigmentations from the skin. It is, therefore, clear that *Priyangu* of the *Mahabharat* was associated with an elite class beauty-culture, and was not a millet or cereal plant, which is the food of the poor. It is from this usage that the plant *Priyangu* derived its name that is *Priya* = soothing and *angu* = body).

In the *Sabha Parva,* the name of *Priyangu* has been listed among the ornamental plants along with *Ashok, Karnika, Nagavriksha, Ketaki, Kashmari etc.* It is also mentioned along with *Badari* (Jujube; *Zizyphus jujube*) tree, implying that the *Priyangu* was also a fruit plant. In fact, we know that *Priyangu* of the *Mahabharat* was not only ornamental and medicinal, but also it had beautiful flowers and sweet fruit of berry type. *Priyangu* is again mentioned along with *Ashoka* and *Tilaka* trees, which are ornamental in nature (MB 3.87.2).

Thus, the *Priyangu* of *Mahabharat* was a flowering tree with sweet berries and purple flower, and it was not only ornamental but was also used for skincare, medicine and cosmetics. However, later this name *Priyangu* got attached to the Foxtail millet, which arrived in its wild form in the Indus-Sarasvati region in about 2600 BCE. However, the domestic form, which is cultivated, has larger seeds and its powder (flour) can be baked and eaten by humans.

In spite of its older presence in the eastern part of India, the Foxtail millet does not register its presence in the Indus-Sarasvati region until 2600 B.C. This is probably because the Indus-Sarasvati region had better cultivable cereal plants available like barley, wheat and rice up to 2600 BCE. Thus, on this ground also, we can safely say that the date of the *Mahabharat era* was before 2600 BCE as the Epic does not mention *Priyangu* as Foxtail Millet.

The oil-seed plant *Tila* (Sesamum, Sesame) originally grew in South India. However, it arrived in the Indus Valley region during the early Harappan stage. We find an explicit mention of *Tila (Sesame)* in the *Mahabharat (Anushasan Parva – 13.88.3-4*). In contrast, the plant's mention is absent from the *Rig-Veda, the astronomical dating of which relates its references to around 6500-5500 BCE.* There is evidence that oil-yielding *Sesame* was found in plant macro remains from Neolithic

Jhusi in Prayagraj (earlier Allahabad) district around 4000 BCE (after Pokharia et al. Current Science, 2009: 567). The oldest record of sesame in the Indus-Sarasvati region from Harappa has been found as charred sesame seeds from a layer dating back to 3500 BCE. (*Bedigian and Harlan 2005; Fuller and Madella 2001:338*). Bedigian and Harlan noted that, outside South Asia, archaeological findings supporting sesame cultivation are from much later dates. Thus, the time of *Mahabharat* comes to be after 3500 BC if we date this text independently on this account of Sesame.

Another tree *Amalaka* (or Amala, Aanwala, or *Phyllanthus amblica*) which produces a berry type sour fruit also grew in the *Mahabharat* period in that region (*Vana Parva* - 3.61.4). The *Rig-Veda* does not mention this tree. However, there is evidence that this plant *Amala* was found in plant macro remains from Neolithic Jhusi in Allahabad district and its carbon dates relate it to 3500 BCE.(*after Pokharia et al. Current Science, 2009: 567).*

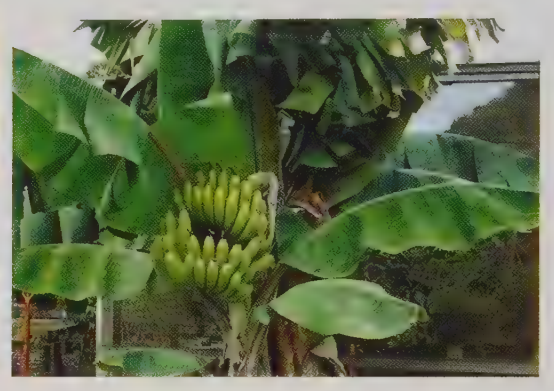
It is important to mention here that there are some hard archaeological findings, which pin the date of the *Mahabharat* period to the Indus Valley Civilization period or say Harappan Civilization and do not allow this to go before the fourth millennium BCE. One such item is *lac* or the sealing wax. Kenoyer proved from his study of this individual artefact from the Harappan Civilization that the Indus Valley people had discovered *lac (Laksha*) during the period of the Harappan Civilization (*Kenoyer 1992:504*). In *Mahabharat,* it has been mentioned as *Laksha* (of the *Laksha-griha* fame). Also, there is an explicit mention of brass by the name *Kansya* (MB 8.94.91). We know from archaeology that brass was not present before Harappa Civilization anywhere in the world. Thus, its mention in the *Mahabharat* is a definite indication that the *Mahabharat* period cannot go back before 4000 BCE.

After referring to the conclusions arrived at by Dr Premendra Priyadarshi in this article, it would be desirable to add a few lines from his book "In Quest of the Dates of the Vedas" (based on Flora, Fauna and Climatic Studies). He has concluded in chapter 6 of this book that Sal trees were found in Northern India in 3500 BCE; Ashvathha (Ficus trees) in 3000 BCE; Banyan in 4000 BCE; Date Palm in 6000 BCE (Mehrgarh); Cotton Seeds in 5500 BCE (Mehrgarh); Jujube alias Ber since 7000 BCE (Mehrgarh). Dr C M Nautiyal added that Jackfruit (*Katahal*) existed as early as in 4000 BCE and Jambu (Jamun) pollens date back to 4000 BCE. All these trees are mentioned in Mahabharat as well.

It would thus be reasonable to conclude that there is a complete concordance between the *Mahabharat* text and the archaeo-botany of Harappan sites. Paleobotanic dates of plants, therefore, place Mahabharat between 3300 BC and 3000 BC; neither before nor later.

ARCHAEO-BOTANICAL STUDIES OF UNDER-MENTIONED PLANTS PLACE MAHABHARAT AROUND 3000 BC - PICTURES OF SOME PLANTS

Weeping willow (Salix babylonica), Lake Ammer, Germany (Gratitude: www.alamy.com)



Kadali (Banana), Courtesy: TopTropicals.com

Aswattha (Peepal), (©https://detechter.com)

Nyagrodha (Banyan), (Court:TopTropicals.com)

Sesame (gratitude: ©www.agrifarming.in)

Date Palm (gratitude: www.justfunfacts.com)

Thus, archaeo-botanical studies of plants mentioned in Mahabharat reveal that these were found in Northern Indian Sub-continent five thousand years back. At least some of these plants were growing in/around 3300-3000 BCE. Their remains were excavated from many Harappan sites, establishing an integral link of Mahabharat references with the Harappan sites. Archaeologists have excavated hundreds of sites in Indus-Sarasvati Region, the carbon dating of artefacts and plant remains excavated relates these to 3500 BCE to 2600 BCE. Historians have preferred to describe these sites as relating to Early and Mature Harappan Civilization. Most of these excavated sites are located in the kingdoms referred to in Mahabharat. The names of plants, the remains of which have been excavated, are also referred to in the Epic. Consequently, would it not be more appropriate to describe this as Vedic Harappan civilization of Mahabharat era?

(This chapter is based on the inputs received from Dr Premendra Priyadarshi, a Fellow of Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, and author of several books linking Vedic references with Archaeo-botanical Studies and Genetics)

CHAPTER 45

Ashwatthama committed the heinous crime of killing Panchals and Pandavas in their sleep

Yudhishthir got very worried thinking that on hearing about how Duryodhana was killed, Gandhari might get angry and using her ascetic powers, she might curse the Pandavas. He, therefore, requested Lord Krishna to go and pacify her. Shri Krishna went to Hastinapur. He reminded Dhritarashtra that the calamity which he was facing was the result of his own actions. He then also told him that Pandavas, the sons of his brother, were the only survivors and they should be treated as his sons as they still respected him. After that, Janardan met Gandhari and pointed to her that what had happened then was being anticipated by her. However, she could not prevent the occurrence of the war as Duryodhana never heeded her advice. Krishna also advised her not to resolve on the destruction of the Pandavas, as the war was forced on them by her own sons. Krishna then left in a hurry, on learning that Ashwatthama was planning a night raid on the Pandavas.

Meanwhile, Sanjay met severely wounded Duryodhana, who lamented before Sanjay his defeat in the battle in which Bhishma, Drona, Karan, and Ashwatthama were his protectors. He then said that destiny was all-powerful. He desired that Ashwatthama, Kripa, and Kritavarman must be told that Bhima slew him by hitting below the navel. Hearing what had happened to Duryodhana, Ashwatthama,

Kripa and Kritavarman quickly came to meet him. Duryodhana was lying on earth bleeding profusely and writhing in pain. Ashwatthama found his condition unbearable and lamented at the terrible reversal of destiny. Duryodhana replied that everybody who was born in this world had to die one day. Since he was dying honourably the death of a Kshatriya warrior, his three surviving friends should not grieve for him. Ashwatthama, however, was filled with wrath. He thought that first his father Drona was killed by using deceitful means by the Pandavas and now the Kuru King had been slain using unfair means. He swore to kill all the Pandavas before Shri Krishna's eyes if Duryodhana permitted him to do so. Duryodhana's hatred for the Pandavas had remained undiminished. He allowed him to do so and immediately consecrated Ashwatthama as the supreme commander of his forces.

The Sun had already set. There was darkness all around in the forest where Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, and Kritavarman were taking rest under a Banyan tree. Fatigued Kripacharya and Kritavarman went off to sleep. However, Ashwatthama was full of indignation and hatred for the Pandavas and was thinking about ways and means by adopting which he should be able to fulfil his promise of killing all the Pandavas before dawn. At that time, he started listening to the noises created by nocturnal birds. Ashwatthama also noticed that on the branches of that big banyan tree, hundreds of crows were asleep until an owl came and started killing the sleeping birds one by one. When Ashwatthama saw the helpless crows getting killed in this manner, he got an idea, and he thought of adopting a similar strategy to kill the sleeping Pandavas. He then woke up Kripacharya and Kritavarman and told them that they could also kill the sleeping Pandavas just as the owl was killing the sleeping crows.

Ashwatthama thereafter suggested that they should enter the tents of Pandavas at night and kill them in their sleep. Bereft of the armies they could thus avenge the deceitful manner in which Pandavas had killed his respected father Drona and their king Duryodhana. H also said that this was the only way in which they could punish the Pandavas who have defeated the Kurus by adopting unfair means. Kripacharya was, however, horrified to hear that suggestion and said that this would be the most outrageous crime against the rules of Kshatriya conduct. He said that killing the warriors in sleep had never been done before in the history of humanity. He wanted to know for whom they should commit such a sinful misdeed. They had already given their best for fighting in support of greedy and wicked Duryodhana, but they had lost the war and Duryodhana had been mortally wounded. Kripa then suggested that they should go and place themselves at the disposal of grief-stricken Dhritarashtra and faultless Gandhari. They could also consult wise Vidur about their next course of action.

Hearing this sound advice of Kripa, the anger and anguish of Ashwatthama only increased, and he retorted bitterly saying that everybody in the world thought that only he knew what was right or wrong. He reiterated that Pandavas have been guilty of killing his father Drona by telling a lie that his son Ashwatthama was dead. Ashwatthama reiterated that the revenge he was proposing was entirely appropriate under the circumstances. He then told about his resolve to execute his plan of killing Pandavas in sleep even if Kripacharya and Kritavarman did not accompany him.

Kripacharya felt deeply anguished and distressed on hearing these words of Ashwatthama and asked him why he wanted to blemish his spotless character as his proposed action amounted to scattering blood on a milky white cloth. No one in the history would ever say that killing the men in sleep was right and the historians would record Ashwatthama's name amongst the sinful people who neither followed the dharma of Brahmanas nor of Kshatriyas. Ashwatthama responded by saying that after this most devastating war, no dharma has been left for being followed. Red with rage, he thundered that he was not interested in researching the principles of dharma and fairness; he was only interested in destroying the Pandavas before dawn to keep his promise to Duryodhana. After killing the Pandavas in sleep, he was ready to be born as a worm in next birth, as he would have avenged the death of his father and the death of his king.

Ashwatthama harnessed his chariot and prepared to leave alone to commit the heinous crime. Kripa and Kritavarman cried from behind asking him to stop as they could neither endorse his proposal, nor could they leave him alone under such adverse circumstances. Ultimately, they decided to go with him. In this manner, evil triumphed much in the same way as it has been prevailing and growing since times immemorial; with noble yielding to the commands of wicked under intimidating circumstances. The double standards followed by the society, in providing support to the wicked in their sinful deeds, have been letting the evil flourish. Ravana committed the sinful act of abducting Sita using force and deceit, his brother Vibhishana repeatedly advised him to abandon that sinful path and save Lanka from destruction but he did not agree. Still, many in society blame Vibhishan for not supporting Ravana in his wicked conduct.

Similarly, after committing innumerable atrocities against Pandavas, Duryodhana finally did thrust the war on them by refusing to give back their kingdom or even an inch of land. Yet, Ashwatthama and many others blamed Pandavas for impropriety during the war. Using these hollow pretexts, A people like Ashwatthama have been able to justify the heinous crime of killing of all the children of Pandavas in their sleep. This is how wickedness has been growing;

one transgression inviting greater wrong-doing and evil submerging virtue altogether.

Ashwatthama, accompanied by Kripa and Kritavarman, reached the Pandava Camp during midnight. Dhrishtadhyumna had plunged in deep slumber due to fatigue of fighting the war for so many days. Ashwatthama then killed him in sleep most cruelly and inhumanly. Then, he killed the soldiers who had tried to follow him, by making use of Rudra weapon. Ashwatthama also murdered Uttamaujus in sleep by keeping his foot on his throat. After that, he killed princes Yudhamanyu and Shikhandin much in the same manner. Then, remembering his father's death and burning with a sense of revenge, Ashwatthama killed all the five sons of Draupadi by severing their heads in sleep. After that, he killed many more sleeping warriors with his sword. Then he came out of the Pandava Camp and with the support of Kripa and Kritavarman, set it on fire from all sides. When the fire spread, the sleeping soldiers awakened; in utter confusion, they started running in all directions like the crows when they were attacked in sleep by the owl. None among those that escaped from the Camp was allowed to go by those two wicked men – Kripa and Kritavarman. Ashwatthama, thus, sinfully and mercilessly killed the surviving Pandavas and Panchals in their sleep. He then told Kripa and Kritavarman to accompany him to give the happy news of this most dastardly and inhuman slaughter to Duryodhana so that he could die in peace. The three of them quickly went to mortally wounded Duryodhana.

They found that there was still some life left in Duryodhana. Ashwatthama reported that all the Panchals had been killed in their sleep. All the five young sons of Pandavas had also been put to death during the night. On the side of Pandavas, there were only seven survivors – five Pandava brothers, Satyaki and Shri Krishna, whereas on the side of Kauravas three of them were the only survivors. Writhing in pain and struggling to open his eyes, Duryodhana then expressed his gratefulness to Ashwatthama saying that what he had done for him what could not be done by Bhishma, Drona, and 11 Akshauhini of forces. He said that he was now happy and was gladly leaving for Yama's abode. Wily Dhritarashtra then asked Sanjay why such a slaughter at midnight was not done earlier by Kritavarman. Sanjay replied that this kind of massacre at night was possible because of the absence of Shri Krishna, Satyaki and five Pandava brothers from the Camp. Sanjay then told Dhritarashtra that, after the death of Duryodhana, he had lost the spiritual insight or say Divya-Drishti given to him by Sage Vyas.

By the end of that terrible night, the charioteer of Dhrishtadhyumna went to Yudhishthir and reported about the unprecedented slaughter of Pandava forces during their sleep. He reported that in an attack during the night, Ashwatthama,

Kripa, and Kritavarman killed thousands of Panchalas; all the five sons of Draupadi had been killed mercilessly when they were in deep slumber. Even Dhrishtadhyumna and Shikhandin had been killed in their sleep. Hearing such dreadful news, Yudhishthir dropped down on earth overpowered by grief. He then lamented that in their moment of victory they had been convincingly defeated. The sinful enemy had slain all those, for whose sake they had resorted to war. Just three survivors of Kauravas have succeeded in killing hundreds of kings, princes and warriors. The vanquished have indeed triumphed.

CHAPTER 46

Sagacious Draupadi pledged that nocturnal murder of her children must be avenged

Yudhishthir lamented that brave sons of Draupadi, who could withstand the attacks from Karna, have all been killed due to their own carelessness. He lamented that Draupadi would not be able to bear the affliction of the death of her sons, her brothers and her father. He sent Nakul to bring Draupadi from Upaplavya. Tears were still flowing down from the eyes of Yudhishthir when Nakul arrived along with the princess of Panchal. Overtaken by sorrow, she fell down prostrate on earth. Consoled by Bhima, she then began to weep uncontrollably. Like a true Kshatrani, she then asked if no one could avenge from the wicked son of Drona the slaughter of her innocent sons and brothers when they were asleep. Wise, pious, and intelligent Draupadi said that she would fast unto death until Ashwatthama was killed and the gem on his head, born with him, was brought to her. Not having much faith in the prowess and will power of Yudhishthir, Draupadi beseeched Bhima to kill Ashwatthama and save her life.

When wronged and anguished Draupadi said these words, Bhima with Nakul as his charioteer immediately went out in search of that vicious murderer Ashwatthama. Most prudent Krishna told Yudhishthir that he had sent Bhima alone to kill that son of Drona, who possessed Brahmashira weapon which was capable of destroying the whole world. Only Arjun was the other person who

possessed knowledge of that weapon. Krishna then warned that Ashwatthama was wrathful, wicked, and rash. Since he was capable of using Brahmashira weapon, Bhima must be saved. Consequently, Shri Krishna, accompanied by other Pandava warriors, went out in his chariot behind Bhima.

Bhima was chasing the wicked son of Drona at full speed when he spotted him sitting surrounded by sage Vyas and other hermits on the banks of Bhagirathi. When he saw Bhima in rage proceeding towards him with a bow stretched and his with his two brothers following in Janardana's car, he became afraid as well as furious. He shot his celestial weapon Brahmashira saying in anger - "for the destruction of the Pandavas". Shri Krishna had understood the action as well as the intention of Drona's son. He then told Arjun to make use of his Brahmashira Weapon. Disciplined Arjun discharged that weapon saying - "Let this weapon neutralize Ashwatthama's weapon". Quickly both the weapons started blazing in dreadful flames. Watching that Sages Vyas and Narad were angry at this irresponsible behaviour of Ashwatthama. Dhananjya gracefully offered to withdraw his weapon provided Ashwatthama also did so.

Son of Drona, however, said that he was unable to withdraw the weapon, after discharging it once. The sages commanded Ashwatthama to either withdraw that weapon or hand over the gem of his head to the Pandavas. Only then, the Pandavas would spare his life. Drona's son refused to hand over the gem. Sage Vyas at that time, told Ashwatthama not to let that weapon fall into the wombs of Pandava women. The son of Drona, however, replied that after discharging it once, he had no control over that Brahmashira weapon and it would undoubtedly fall into the wombs of Pandava women. Realizing the immediate threat to the pregnancy of Uttara, Abhimanyu's wife and king Virat's daughter, Shri Krishna asked wily Ashwatthama to protect her womb, but he refused to oblige. Shri Krishna cursed that sinful son of Drona, saying that he was the slayer of children, therefore for about three years, he would wander around on earth, suffering from various diseases, without a companion and without being able to talk to anyone -

तस्मात्त्वमस्य पापस्य कर्मणः फलमाप्नुही ।
त्रीणि वर्षसहस्राणि चरिष्यसि महीमिमाम् ।। सौप्तिक पर्व 10/16/10 ।।
अप्राप्नुवन् कचित् काञ्चित् संविदं जातु केनचित् ।
निर्जनानसहायस्त्वं देशान् प्रविचरिष्यसि ।। सौप्तिक पर्व 10/16/11 ।।

Meaning: "Always engaged in sinful deeds, You, O Ashwatthama, are the slayer of children. Therefore, you must bear the fruit of your sinful deeds. For about three years, you shall wander on this earth; suffering from several diseases, without a companion, and without being able to talk with anyone. It needs to be clarified

here that the expression *'sahasrani'* added to the number of years meant "approximately" in ancient Sanskrit (Bhagavaddutt Satyashrava, 2000).

Shri Krishna also added that the son of Uttara, named Parikshit, would not only survive but would rule for 60 years as the mighty ruler of Kurus. Sage Vyas added that since the son of Drona had acted viciously and had disobeyed them, every word which Krishna said would turn out to be true. Ashwatthama then handed over his shining jewel of the head to Bhima, acknowledged his defeat, and went away to the forest.

Quickly going back the Pandavas and Shri Krishna sat around grief-stricken Draupadi. Bhima then handed over the jewel removed from Ashwatthama's head to Draupadi saying that man who had killed her children had been vanquished. All the promises made by Bhima to Draupadi had been fulfilled. After killing Dushasana, Bhima had consumed his blood; he had killed Duryodhana by breaking those thighs by displaying which he had humiliated pious Draupadi in the Kuru assembly; he had also killed all the sons of Dhritarashtra during the war. Draupadi then took that jewel and handed over the same to Yudhishthir, saying that he should wear that in his crown. King Yudhishthir looked bright with that jewel on his head. Draupadi, who possessed enormous mental strength, gave up her fast unto death and tried to live with the unbearable loss.

Chapter 47

Archaeological evidence has revealed that most of the excavated Harappan sites, dated around 3000 BCE, were located in the kingdoms described in Mahabharat

The history of civilization in Indian Sub-continent neither started with Indus-Sarasvati civilization nor did it come to an end with its fall. Neither any Aryans came from Central Asia nor were Indians *aboriginal savages* around 1500 BCE. The history of culture and civilization in India dates back to Rigvedic people, who lived on the banks of Sarasvati and Sindhu River systems since 8000-7000 BCE. Recent excavations at hundreds of sites in Indus, Sarasvati, and Ganga regions have revealed that Harappan settlements almost precisely match the descriptions in Rigveda and even in Atharva Veda. The Vedic **geography** coincides precisely with the very domain of the Harappan civilization (*R S Bisht 1999; M Acharya 1994; B B Lal 1997; and Bhagwan Singh 1995*). The ancient settlements were all along those rivers that are mentioned in Vedas and Epics. Some of these have also been described as navigable (*navya*). Many of these still flow in the same sequence, and dry channels of many others have been captured in remote sensing imagery.

Entire Harappan ecology has been described in Vedas sequentially, comprehensively and correctly; starting with melting of glaciers *around 9000 BCE*,

cold, dry climate thereafter, good monsoons around 5500 BCE due to shifting of Bay of Bengal monsoon to the Arabian Sea around that period. After that, the dry phase had begun around 3500 BCE which continued right up to 1900 BCE due to shifting back of the Arabian Sea monsoon to the Bay of Bengal (*Rigveda; Mahabharat; Bhagwan Singh 1995; Francfort 1992; Giosan 2012; Priyadarshi 2014*). Therefore, it was the climate which gave rise to prosperity, with abundant crops, good maritime trade, development of art and craft and opportunity for living better lives in planned and well-administered urban settings.

There has been biological continuity for last more than 10000 years in Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga regions, say the geneticists. The Genome studies during the Holocene have revealed that the genetic profile of humans settled all over India, including caste and tribal populations is a result of extensive sharing of ancient substratum which is reflected since Holocene (11000 years BP) to the present. It is also significant to note that the inhabitants of the Harappan civilization were not mysterious people of unknown biological origins or migrants from western/ central Asia. They were the indigenous people identified with the pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures of the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent. Further, contrary to popular belief, the Dravidians, as well as north Indians, have common ancestors and both are originals of India; they have a common genetic profile and had common ancestors (*Kivisild 1999; Rao 2012; Gyaneshwar Chaubey 2015*). It would not be out of place to mention that *Hemphill and Christensen* (1994) had concluded that gene inflow was primarily from Indus Valley into Bactria and not the other way round.

There is neither any literary account nor any archaeological evidence of any invasion of India by Aryans. The latest genome studies have categorically disproved this entire imaginary hypothesis. There is absolutely no archaeological, palaeo-botanical, or any other scientific evidence of any Aryan invasion during the last 10000 years. There is not the faintest memory of any such invasion in any old Indian texts. To the contrary, we have unambiguous references to Aryans going out of the Indian sub-continent, and there is very credible multi-disciplinary scientific evidence, including that from genetic studies and archaeology, which proves that dispersal had happened the other way round.

Hundreds of recent excavations, including those in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, Bhirrana and Rakhigarhi, Banawali and Kunal, have yielded substantial evidence to prove that Indus- Sarasvati Civilization developed out of earlier regional cultures to be dated back to eighth millennium BCE. *Dr A P J Abdul Kalam (2012)* had declared on 30th July 2011, "I am happy that through such genomic studies, it has been proved that Harappan civilization was not of mysterious people

of unknown biological origins or migrants from centres of high culture in western Asia. Actually, they were descendants of the population identified with pre-Harappan cultures of the North-Western sector of the subcontinent ..... I am also happy that through the use of modern technology, the perception of Indian Archeology has changed and has facilitated the researchers to prove an indigenous origin of civilization in the Indian Subcontinent".

The traditional unrealistic view of India's history, which says that India was uncivilized around 3500 years back and that some unidentified invaders had developed the Vedic culture, pushing the Harappan people down South, or in forests, deserved to be discarded instantly because of the plethora of multi-disciplinary scientific evidence. Almost all the excavated Harappan sites have yielded similar types of samples and artefacts. Vedas and Epics have made a reference to most of these items and many inhabitants of North India are still using similar specimens and artefacts. Is it not a matter of shame that even after 70 years of independence, we have not identified any of our archaeological cultures with our literary cultures with consensus? The historians committed to a particular ideology, turned India's real Vedic History into mythology by making use of their positions, money-power and brains. They tried their best to deny the credit to the Vedic Aryans for creating a magnificent Harappan civilization, even though the multi-disciplinary scientific evidence was too stark and too real in support of this assertion. Closing their eyes and ears to the reports of excavations carried out during the last several decades at several sites along the banks of Sarasvati, Indus and Ganga river systems, they still cling to the falsehood of Aryan Invasion theory. This theory had accidentally got created by Mortimer Wheeler when he propounded that Aryans from Central Asia invaded India around 1500 BC, and they destroyed the Harappan Cities (*Wheeler 1947*).

Subsequently, when several excavated Harappan sites revealed that indigenous civilization had been flourishing in India for last more than 8000 years, another imaginary story was taught as History! As per this fanciful theory, these Aryan invaders were so powerful that they succeeded in destroying highly developed and urbanized Harappan civilization! Whatever the extent and depth of evidence, these pseudo-historians refused to acknowledge the glaring similarities between references in Vedas and Epics and samples and artefacts excavated from Harappan settlements. Our ancient history books deserve to be changed entirely by writing therein scientifically proven facts as history, which reveal indigenous development of civilization for the last 8000 years. The ancient history can be written with a fair amount of accuracy by determining the astronomical dates of planetary references in Vedas and Epics, using latest planetarium softwares. After that, these astronomical dates can be compared and corroborated with proofs from archaeology, palaeo-

botany, oceanography, hydrology and remote sensing images *(Saroj Bala 2012, 2019; Rajaram & Frawley 2014)*. Thus, history deserves to be written using pure scientific proofs and by ensuring that there is no distortion introduced based on any ideologies or prejudices.

Civilization has been continuously developing and flourishing in India, particularly along ancient Indus and Sarasvati valleys, for last more than 8000 years. It has been described as Harappan because Harappa was the first site excavated in 1920-1921 by Daya Ram Sahni. After that, more than 3000 sites have been excavated in ancient Indus, Sarasvati and Ganga basins, pushing back the antiquity of 'Harappan' civilization by quite a few millennia, having constant indigenous growth. However, no serious attempt has ever been made to use more appropriate terminology. The archaeologists and the historians used terms like Pre-Harappan, Late-Harappan, and even Post-Harappan even for the sites which they thought had no marked resemblance with Harappa culture and were dated much earlier or much later.

The word 'Harappa' was not known to India's ancient literature represented by Vedas, Epics and Puranas. *Wheeler (1953),* however, identified Harappa as Hariyupiya of the Veda, to prove that Indra was the destroyer of Indus cities. At that time, he did not know that hundreds of towns along ancient Indus, Sarasvati and Ganga river systems were waiting to be excavated, tracing the origins and development of civilization to 8th millennia BCE, similar to the one revealed at Harappa. Therefore, many eminent archaeologists, like Possehl, SR Rao, S P Gupta, Bhagwan Singh, R S Bisht, Shivaji Singh, Indudhar Dwivedi and Vimal Tiwari, have made out a case for adopting more realistic and relevant terminology. Some of the expressions suggested by these archaeologists are Indus-Sarasvati civilization, village economy- town economy culture, regionalization era-integration era, Vedic Harappan civilization, and so on.

The choice of terminology made by *Shri Bhagwan Singh (1995), Dr R S Bisht (1999)* and Dr Shivaji Singh, and many others terming these settlements as Vedic Harappan and treating their inhabitants as Vedic people appears to be much more realistic and convincing. After reading and analyzing books and articles authored by most of the eminent archaeologists, an opinion has been formed that it would be more appropriate to adopt the under mentioned expressions for different phases of this indigenously developing civilization for more than 10,000 years (courtesy, Bisht R S) –

1. **Early Farming period**: 8000 BCE to 5000 BCE: Mehrgarh, Kili Gul Mohammed, Rana Ghundai, Ghumla, Sarai Khola, Burj, Lahuradeva, Jhusi, and numerous other sites (May be described as Pre-Harappan Aceramic or **Early Rigvedic culture**)

2. **Village Economy** (with farming, ceramics, metallurgy and houses etc.): 5000 BCE to 3500 BCE: Amri, Sothi, Kunal, Bhirrana, Padri, Mehrgarh and hundreds of other excavated locations (May be described as Pre-Harappan phase Ceramic or **Proto-Vedic Harappan civilization**)

3. **Period of Town Economy**: 3500 BCE to 2600 BCE – Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Banawali, Dholavira, Surkotada, Nausharo, Kot Diji, Bhirrana, Rakhigarhi, Kalibangan, Mehrgarh and several other sites (May be described as Early and Mature Harappan Phase or as **Vedic Harappan or Mahabharat civilization**)

4. **Metropolitan Phase:** 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE - Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Banawali, Dholavira, Surkotada, Nausharo and numerous other sites (May be described as Integration era of Mature Harppan sites or **Late Vedic Harappan civilization).**

(Note: Thus the mature Harappan civilization had started flourishing from around 3000 BCE but its integration phase, which led to evolvement of Metropolis, had started from around 2600 BCE, leading to coming into existence of Harappa, Mohenjodaro etc.)

Shri K N Dikshit has described the continuity of Vedic Harappan civilization, saying that the "Pre-Harappan settlers" in the long run gave rise to primary urbanization till the early/mature Harappans did not wholly occupy the scene by constructing monumental buildings, grid pattern planning, granaries, script, various types of exquisite pottery, and a range of crafts. All these samples and artefacts were found from sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Dholavira, Lothal, and many more other sites; these inhabitants simultaneously established maritime trade contacts (*Dikshit 2013).*

Since almost all the sequential astronomical dates of Mahabharat references place the war in 3139 BCE, archaeological sites having samples and artefacts with C14 dating of 3500-2600 BCE would relate to the Mahabharat era. In other words, the sites related to the Period of Town Economy or say Vedic Harappan civilization (Indus-Sarasvati civilization) would, in reality, refer to the Mahabharat era. It must be noted that C14 dating is for the point in time, when the plant was no more alive, and the process of assimilation of radiocarbon into the plant from the atmosphere had stopped. Thus, if species of any tree or plant had been in existence in a particular settlement for more than 700-800 years, the C14 age of the settlement would get understated to that extent. The method of determining C14 date is described in Box 7.

Box 7: How do we determine the dates of these antiquities and excavated objects?

The Radiocarbon Dating is the most commonly used method for dating most of the excavated materials anywhere in the world. This method is based on the principal of change in amount of radiocarbon (C14) with the passage of time at a known rate. Radiocarbon is a radioactive isotope of carbon with atomic weight 14. It reduces to its half-life in 5730 years. By the rule of half, the process will go on, which means that the remainder will reduce to further half (i.e. ¼ of the original) in another 5730 years and so on.

For the age deduced for a piece of excavated charcoal in this manner, the implicit assumption is also about the age for the inhabitants of the settlement. Similarly, the age of the sediment can be considered to represent the period when the plant was still alive. In C14 dating, the dating is for the point of time when the plant was no more alive and process of assimilation of radiocarbon into plant from the atmosphere had stopped. Thus, if species of any tree or plant had been in existence in a settlement for one or two thousand years, the C14 age of the settlement will get understated to that extent.

For ensuring the correctness of the dates determined for any ancient culture, the sample collected from the site is of utmost importance. If the sample sent for C14 dating is not from the lowest levels, the antiquity of the sample as well as of the corresponding culture will get understated. For example in Lahuradeva, the age of cultivated rice in upper level was 5000 BP (Before present) whereas during the excavations taken up at second stage Dr Rakesh Tewari and team had dug deeper at the appropriate point. As a result, the C14 dates of crops and other artifacts excavated from the lower levels went back to 7200 - 7000 BP.

Even after independence since the mid-twentieth century, it usually is being taught in schools and colleges that India was uncivilized before 1500 BCE, when Aryans as nomads invaded this area and then quickly composed Vedas and Epics. This history was written using linguistic guesswork, religious hearsay, and some archaic archaeology reports. For political and ideological reasons, this imaginary history was being taught in Indian schools and colleges even after independence, even though it did not represent the actual historical events of the remote past of India. One after the other, excavations of several sites in Indus areas, including those of Harappa in 1921, 1940 & 2011 (*Vats, 1940 & Kenoyer, 2011*), Mohenjo-Daro in 1931 (*Marshall 1931*), and Mehrgarh in 1974-81 (*Jarrige 1995*) pushed back the antiquity of Indian civilization by a few millennia. The archaeological reports revealed that indigenous culture had been slowly evolving and developing for the last 9000 years in the area. Some pseudo-historians, however, preferred to describe this Indus-Sarasvati Civilization as Harappan civilization, and not the Vedic Civilization even though they might have been fully aware of the marked similarities of these settlements and towns with descriptions in Vedas and Epics.

Let us have one look at the scholarly article written by eminent archaeologist *Dr B R Mani*, who wrote that in the sites plotted on under-mentioned Map, village communities had already developed and settled before 4000 BCE, i.e. before the rise of Harappan culture. Therefore, most of these sites had naturally evolved into urban/semi-urban places a thousand years later during the Mahabharat era.

Map showing the Village Settlements and Early Farming Communities of northern South Asia during 9th to 4th millennium BCE (Courtesy: Dr B R Mani, Puratattva 35)

A few years later, it was proved beyond doubt through satellite imagery, geological and hydrological studies that there were a large number of sites waiting to be excavated along the dry courses of ancient Sarasvati River System. Post-independence, more than 1200 sites situated along the tributaries and distributaries of prehistoric Sarasvati River System, were explored/excavated. These yielded samples and artefacts similar to those excavated in the Indus basin. The datelines revealed were identical to those of excavated sites of the Indus River system. These excavations also have unambiguously revealed that almost exactly similar culture and civilization, which could be described as 'Vedic' flourished along with these two River Systems.

This civilization has been evolving and continuously flourishing for the last 8000 years, indigenously. As a result, many of the historians and the archaeologists

started describing this ancient civilization of India as Indus-Sarasvati Civilization. However, many others continued to describe it as Harappan. The most famous sites excavated along the course of ancient Sarasvati river system are Kalibangan (*Lal & Thapar 1967*), Bhirrana in 2004-05 (*Rao L S 2004*), Rakhigarhi (*Amrendra Nath and Shinde, 2014 seminar*), Banawali (*Bisht 1978, 1999*), Lothal (*Rao S R 1973*), Kunal; seven rounds from 1993 to 2019 (*Khatri and Acharya 1995 & the Hindu, Feb 2019*), Dholavira (*Bisht 1997*) *etc.* One look at the map given below on which some main sites excavated in Sarasvati–Drishadvati areas (Ghaggar-Hakkra belt) have been plotted, would make it clear that these sites already had developed urban settlements during 5000–3000 BCE. These Vedic Harappans had relatively advanced town planning, baked bricks, multi-storied houses, different kinds of pottery, variety of seals and sealings and much more.

Distribution of sites in Hakra- Sarasvati basin during 5th – 3rd millennium BCE (Courtesy: Shri K N Dikshit in Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology, 2013,)

After the excavation of hundreds of sites in Sarasvati basin revealing such antiquity of India's culture and civilization, most of the historians and the archaeologists believed that middle Ganga plains remained uncivilized probably till the mythological Aryan invasion around 1500 BCE. However, the results of excavations at Lahuradeva (*Tewari et al., 2008*), followed by those at Jhusi (*Misra 2009*), Hetapatti (*Pal 2007-08*), and Koldihwa (*IAR 73&75*) in Ganga basin and located around Sangam have revealed gradual development of culture in these settlements. Such development is from Mesolithic culture to the early medieval period, through Neolithic, Chalcolithic phase; enlightening us about the indigenous development of culture for more than 7000 years.

The excavations at Lahuradewa (*Tewari 2003; 2006a; 2008*) have altogether altered the existing scenario of the antiquity of the region, known as Middle Ganga Plains. The results of the excavations indicated that the human occupation and cultivation of rice, barley, wheat, pulses *etc.* in this *Saryupar* (on the eastern side of Saryu River) region had started as early as in the seventh millennium BCE. In four phases of the cultural sequence at this site, the archaeologists found some pottery items appearing similar to those excavated from Harappan sites. Besides, there was evidence of ornaments made of semi-precious stones along with proof of metallurgy in the form of copper arrowheads and hooks *etc.* Some of these sites have been displayed on the map given below –

Map Showing Neolithic/Chalcolithic Settlements (7th to 3rd Millennium BC) in Middle Ganga Plain (Courtesy: Kulbhushan & Tiwari, I-SERVE Seminar in Feb 2014 - http://bit.ly/2FDUCNd)

During last three decades archaeological excavations, duly supplemented by recent multi-disciplinary scientific evidence, have altogether changed the general perception of the civilizational antiquity of the Middle Ganga Plains. The Vedic, Epic and Puranic traditions had already hinted at the hoary past of the central Ganga basin. Still, the archaeologists had not been able to push back the antiquity of the region earlier due to lack of substantial evidence. But now it would be

appropriate to call the civilization, which flourished alongside the ancient courses of Indus, Sarasvati and Ganga River systems, as Vedic Civilization. We may also designate it as Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga Civilization because the latest excavations at thousands of sites, along the ancient banks of these three river systems, have revealed continuous evolvement of indigenous civilization during the current Holocene. Samples and artefacts excavated from the sites of Middle Ganga Plains quite convincingly match the descriptions in Vedas and Epics.

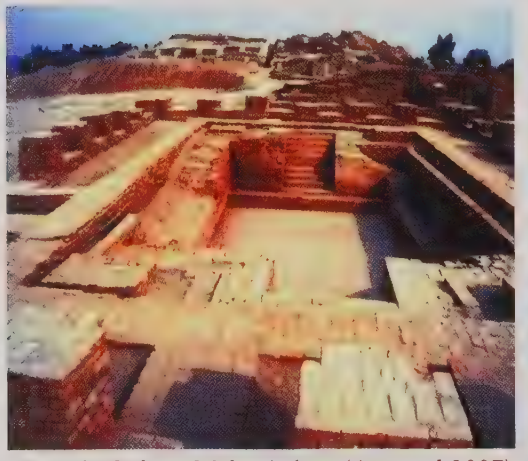
It is, therefore, clear that the Vedic Civilization never came to an end; it only saw rise and fall, waxing and waning, changes and evolvement but the underlying culture remained the same. We Indians continue to follow the very same Vedic rituals and customs, Vedic symbols and crafts and continue to use similar types of utensils and ornaments. Almost all the samples and artefacts, excavated from most of these archaeological sites, are still being used in India. This conclusion is supported by the list of excavated articles, given along with their pictures, in succeeding Paragraphs.

The excavated samples and artefacts, having radiocarbon dates from 3500 BCE to 2600 BCE, have revealed that the town planning and architecture, pottery and terracotta, weapons and jewellery, religious symbols and craft items, plants and crops, seals and sealings, articles for trade and commerce are directly connected to the Vedic Harappans of Mahabharat era. Most of these items existed before them, also continued to be in existence after them, and these exist till date. Some of the features, samples, articles and artefacts commonly found at most of these Vedic Harappan sites are listed below –

Architecture and Town planning– Marshall wrote while compiling excavation report on Mohenjodaro (1931), "Anyone walking for the first time in Mohenjodaro might fancy himself surrounded by the ruins of the present-day working town of Lancashire..... bearing in every feature the mark of stark urbanization". The excavated samples and artefacts from Mohenjodaro and most of the other urban Harappan sites include –

- Provinces and kingdoms duly managed by a central authority
- Acropolises for kings and priests, Citadels for the rich and lower towns for commoners
- Water reservoirs for rainwater harvesting, multiple wells, and water distribution system
- Bathing Platforms and bathing facilities provided in each house as well
- Drainage system distributed freshwater and carried away the effluents

- Granaries / Warehouses for storing grains and other food items
- Use of timber and baked bricks in constructing buildings, in addition to mud-bricks



Great bath from Mohenjodaro (Agrawal 2007)

The Granary from Harappa (Vats 1940)

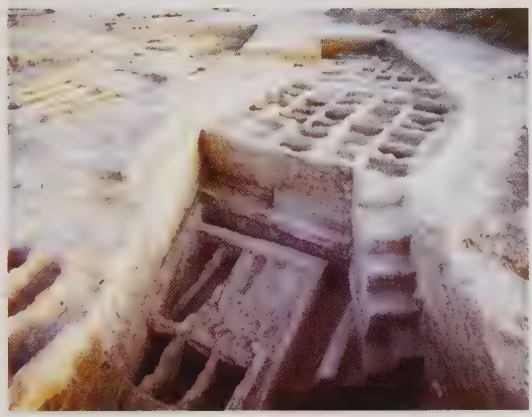
Water Tank from Dholavira (Bisht, 1997)

Lothal Dockyard (Chakraborty, 2004)

Types of houses built by Vedic Harappans – In the words of Dr Bhagwan Singh (1995), there was total conformity between textual information contained in Vedas and Epics and the excavated material establishing that Vedic people were thoroughly acquainted with the urban settlements. It was probably a matter of prejudice that it was almost made into a gospel truth (false, of course) that Vedic people did not have any knowledge of cities. The excavations have revealed that Vedic people of Mahabharat era were fully aware of various types of houses that Vedic Harappans had built by around 3000 BCE -

- Starting with mud-plastered pit dwellings, they graduated to -
- Houses made of mud and handmade mud bricks,
- Several mud-brick structures were divided into small cell-like compartments
- After that, there were houses with multiple pillars and doors,
- Three storied strong houses
- Use of timber and baked bricks
- Finally palaces with multiple rooms, halls, and water pools

House structure from Lothal
(Rao S R 1991)



Multi-storied buildings from Mehrgarh
(Jarrige, 1982)

House Structures of Mehrgarh
(jarrige 1995)

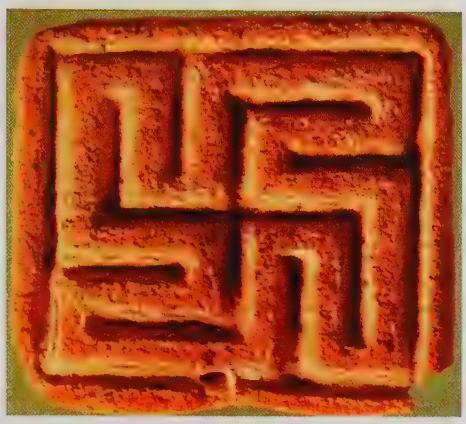
Structures of the period I, Bhirrana
(L.S. Rao 2004)

Symbols of Cultural and Religious practices of Vedic Harappans of Mahabharat era – In the words of Macdonell (1981), "The foundation on which Vedic mythology rests is still the belief, surviving from remote antiquity, that all the objects and phenomenon of nature with which man is surrounded, are animate and divine." Excavated samples include:

- Shiva worship in Rigveda and Mahabharat; Shivalingas excavated at many sites
- Seals with motifs of worship of Fire God, Indra and Ashvins
- Pipal and Banyan tree worship; excavated artefacts support these references
- Motifs of Swastika and Om found in multiple sites
- The Mother Goddess and Terracotta figurines in Yoga postures
- Terracottas in Namaskar mudra, a method of conveying greetings
- female figurine having vermilion on the medial portion of hair
- Presence of horse in Vedic Harappan sites: Marshall found horse bones from Mohenjodaro, Bhola Nath from Harappa, J P Joshi from Surkotada, other excavators from Rana Ghundai, Hallur and Malvan. Terracotta figurines of horses have been found all over Indus Sarasvati sites.

A Terracotta figure greeting with namaste, from Harappa (Vats M.S. 1940)

Terracotta female figurine indicates the use of vermilion from Nausharo (Jarrige 1986)



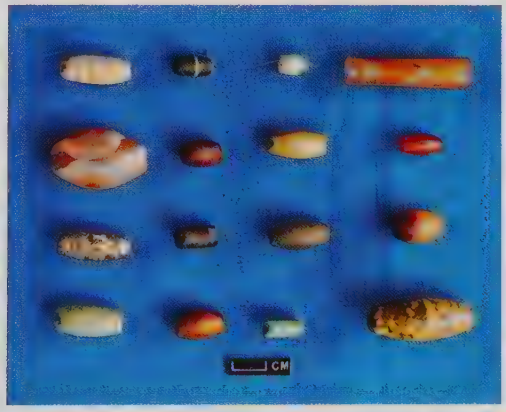
Swastika motif engraved on a seal from Mohenjo-Daro (Shah and Parpola, 1991; Courtesy: shodhganga website)

Terracotta Linga-cum-Yoni from Kalibangan (Lal B B, 2009)

Terracotta models of boats from Lothal (Bhagwan Singh, 1995)

Standard weights from Harappan sites (Bhagwan Singh, 1995);

Agate & other beads from Banawali (Bisht 1982)



Beads of Semi-precious stones from Lothal (Rao 1973)

Copper objects from Dholavira (after Bisht, 1997)

Copper mirror from Dholavira (after Bisht, 1997)

Art, Craft and jewellery of Vedic Harappans during Mahabharat period – Vedic Harappans were continually innovating and experimenting. When their artists and artisans created new kinds of pottery and artefacts, archaeologists should not deny them the credit by saying that probably there was a shift of population. A large variety of art and craft items have been excavated from Harappan sites of Mahabharat era -

- an ivory comb found from Mohenjo-Daro;
- terracotta gamesmen from Lothal, stone gamesmen from Dholavira and a terracotta cubical dice from Mohenjo-Daro;
- painted jars were having depictions of the stories of 'The Thirsty Crow' and 'The Cunning Fox' from Lothal; these are still the most popular stories.
- Initially, there were necklaces of beads of steatite, turquoise, lapis lazuli and marine shells *etc.*
- Subsequently, they made gold beads and beads in different shapes for making necklaces, churamani, bangles, headgear and other jewellery.
- Ornate silver and gold jewellery, including necklaces and rings
- Shell working, ivory works, and Ceramic industry

Silver Ornaments from Kunal (Khatri & Acharya), Carnelian belt from Mohenjodaro & other gold, agate jewellery (Marshall 1931, courtesy (Shinde 2014)

Gold Ornaments from Mandi, (Muzaffarnagar Admn. UP)

Gold Ornaments from Banawali (Bisht, 1978)

Gold necklace from Mohenjodaro (Agrawal 2007)

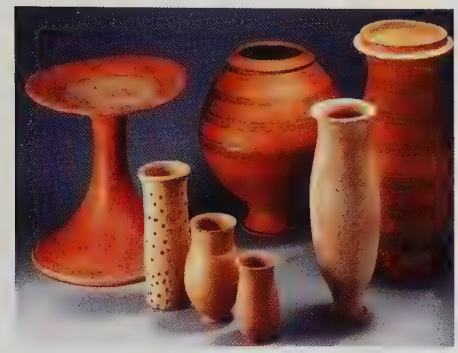
Gold disc Beads from Lothal (Agrawal 2007)

Painted Jar Depicting Story of Clever thirsty Crow from Lothal (S R Rao, 1973)

Gaming Board and gamesmen from Dholavira (Bisht, 1997)

Vedic Harappan Pottery and Terracotta through many millennia –The kinds of pottery should indeed not become the indicator to define phases. Black slipped grey ware, occurring with Black-and-red ware influenced the development of PGW. Notably black-and-red ware is a companion ware of the Harappan period at Lothal and several other contemporary sites. Harappans produced a range of ceramic items and their pottery was wheel-made, well-fired with exquisite designs. Most of the pottery items find references in Rigveda and Mahabharat:

- Handmade and wheel-turned pottery of different varieties found at excavated sites
- Baked vessels were decorated with paintings of birds and animals and geometric designs
- Redware decorated with *Pipal* leaf, and other motifs
- Well-fired grey ware and designs on pottery which match Vedic motifs,
- Black and Red ware, Reserve Slipware, Fine Redware,
- Buff ware, gritty redware and burnished redware
- Pottery included Bowls, Jars, Vases, Basins, Pitchers like pots, Dishes and Dish on stand, Beakers, Cups, Pans, Utensils with Handles, Feeding Cups, Perforated Vessels, and large storage jars, and so on (Classification by Mackay, 1938). Most of these have been mentioned in Rigveda (Bhagwan Singh, 1995; 137-158)



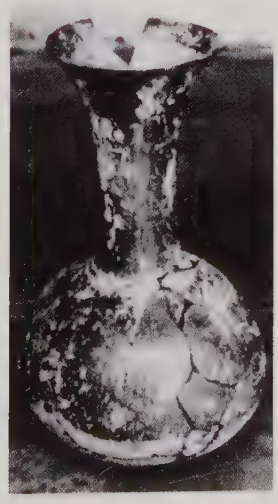
Standardised Harappan Pottery (Shinde Vasant, 2014)

Similarity of Harappan pottery with modern pottery (Shinde Vasant, 2014)

Grey ware Dish with fish in an aquatic environment, Mehrgarh (Jarrige, 1995),

Bichrome painted pottery from Harappa (Vats, 1997)

1. 2. 3.



1. Pot painted with bull motif from Nausharo (Jarrige, 1995)
2. Burnished globular jar, Burzahom (After mani, 2006)
3. Goblet, with polychrome geometric designs from Mehrgarh (Jarrige, 1995)

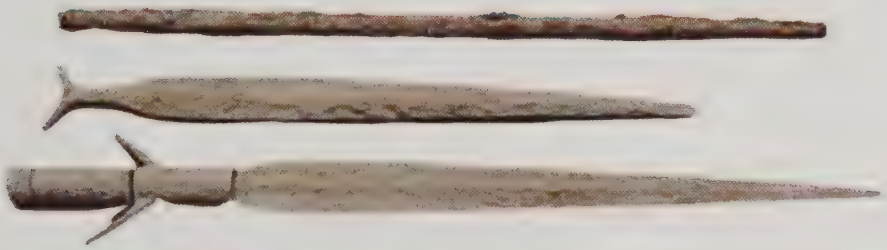
Metallurgy and Weaponry – Weapons excavated initially from Vedic Harappan sites were tools and weapons consisting of bone scrapers, chisels, hammers, needles, pointers, borers, awls, arrowheads etc. Subsequently, copper and bronze were used in abundance to make various types of weapons. However, the latest excavations carried out by Dr Manjul in Sanauli (District Baghpat of UP) have changed the entire perception about the weapons of Mahabharat times. He unearthed a warrior buried along with his chariot, using copper-headgear, swords, and daggers which ignite our memories of Mahabharat references. The metal items and weapons found include -

- Metal tools, crafts and weapons
- bent-bladed knives, double-edged razors, and chisels
- Copper bangles, vessels, mirrors, and needles
- Beads, rings and other jewellery
- Copper arrowheads, knives, daggers, spears, maces, and swords
- A warrior buried with his chariot, his copper headgear, dagger, sword, and shield etc was unearthed during excavations from Sanauli in Baghpat district of UP. This is a great find which supports the historicity as well as the dating of Mahabharat.

Excavated Remains at Panr in Samastipur Distt., Iron objects, Bone arrowheads and beads of Semi-precious Stone (Photo Courtesy - Aditi Nandan from http://www.artzindia.com) (Photo-K P Jayaswal Institute at http://kpjri.res.in/)

Copper arrowheads from Bhirrana (Rao L S 2004)

Copper arrowheads from Kunal (Khatri & Acharya 1995)



Hilted antenna sword, antenna sword and copper channel from burial pit no. 5, Sanauli (Manjul and Manjul, Pl. 8; Puratattva 48, 2018)

Coffin, shield, chariot pole, torch, Tortoise-based copper chalice (or Headgear?): (Pl. 6 from burial pit no. 6, Sanauli) (Manjul and Manjul; Puratattva 48)

Remains of chariots in burial pit no. 6, Sanauli (Manjul and Manjul, Pl. 12; Puratattva 48)

Agricultural practices and Crops – Vedic people were engaged in advanced agricultural practices during the pre-Harappan period. They created a perfect mix of rural and urban culture during the early Vedic Harappan and Mature Vedic Harappan periods. Several types of crops including wheat, rice and pulses *etc.* were being cultivated; furrowing and ploughing *etc.* were very well-known to these Vedic Harappans of Mahabharat era:

- Oldest crops included wheat and barley
- Later rice and millets were also cultivated
- Crops – wheat, barley, field peas, rice, gram, jujube,
- Commercial crops - Sesame, mustard and Cotton
- Other pulses, vegetables and fruit plants
- Wooden ploughs with sharp-edged copper bars, drawn by bullocks were excavated
- Copper sickles and chert blades were also found during excavations

An Agricultural field showing cross-ploughing pattern of the pre-urban, early Harappan period, Kalibangan (Lal B B 2003)

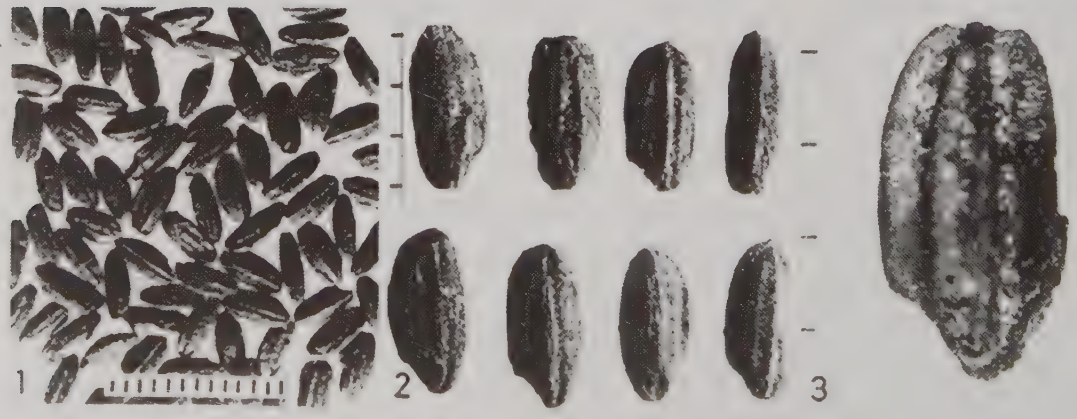
Terracotta model of a plough from Banawali, Mature Harappan (Bisht 1978)

Rice, wheat and barley etc. have been cultivated by the Harappans for more than 7000 years. In Kunal, Hisar District of Haryana, carbonized seeds and grains were found along palaeo-channel of Saraswati, which were dated 3106 BCE to 2577 BCE (Saraswat & Pokharia, 2003). A variety of grains excavated from Kanmer in Kuchchh, Gujarat, the dates determined were from 3660 BCE to 1785 BCE. In Tokwa of Vindhya Region, the cultivated rice, barley, bread wheat, lentils, and green grams have been dated as belonging to 3rd millennium BCE (*Pokharia, 2008*). Some closer look at pictures of excavated plant remains from Jhusi and Lahuradeva would make it clear that these plants were grown in India much before the Harappan civilization and have continued to be grown thereafter also.

Plant Macro remains from Neolithic Jhusi in Ganga Plains (after Pokharia et al. Current Science, 2009)

Jhusi - a, Oryza sativa (rice); b, Hordeum vulgare (hulled barley); c, Triticum aestivum (bread-wheat); d, Triticum sphaerococcum (dwarf-wheat); e, Lens culinaris (lentil); f, Vigna radiata cotyledons (green-gram); g, Lathyrus sativus (grass-pea); h, Pisum arvense (field-pea); i, Vigna radiata (green-gram); j, Macrotyloma uniflorum (horse-gram); k, Sesamum indicum (sesame); l, Linum usitatissimum (linseed); m, Emblica Officinalis (anwala); n, Vitis vinifera (grape) showing chalazal scar on dorsal side; o, Vitis vinifera (grape) showing two narrow and deep furrows on ventral side; p, Vicia sativa (common vetch); q, r, Coix lachrymal-jobi (Job's tear) (after Pokharia et al. Current Science, 2009)

Plants of Middle Ganga Plains existing before 3000 BC i.e. during Mahabharat Era



Grains of Domesticated rice from Lahuradeva, Sant Kabir Nagar in UP; Grains of wheat and barley were also excavated from the same levels (after Tewari & Saraswat et al.)

Listed above are only some of the significant crops, and samples found during excavations at *Vedic Harappan* sites; these reveal that in spite of the changes in climate and rainfall, the people of India have continued to cultivate many of these crops till date and these remain their staple diet. Do we need any more evidence to declare that Vedic civilization was developing much before the Harappan culture? Due to mid-Holocene climatic optima and consequential abundant crops, there was prosperity, and these people became the architects of great Harappan civilization related to Mahabharat era. After that, the arid phase had started, which continued for hundreds of years; finally, they had to abandon living in large cities after 2000 BCE. Again when climatic conditions improved, they resettled in new settlements but tended to come back in the vicinity of the settlements which they had earlier abandoned. That is why in many of the kingdoms, which participated in the Mahabharat war, the proofs of the existence of Janapadas related to 800-600 BCE were also excavated. Similar articles, samples and artefacts excavated from Harappan sites listed above still exist and we Indians still use similar items, particularly in rural areas and small towns. We still follow identical cultural and religious practices. Therefore, it is entirely incorrect to say that the Vedic Harappan civilization came to an end. It continued through more than nine millennia, rising and falling; waxing and waning, but still continues absorbing many changes in the process.

The Vedic Harappan Script and language: Seals and Sealings – In the words of Dr S R Rao, "the Harappans were literate people who left for posterity more than 3200 seals and sealings made of stone, clay, and metal. Many of these have some animal motif in the lower part and inscription in the upper portion". There have been differences of opinion about the decipherment of the script, but that is more with the intention of keeping the controversy alive and not letting the antiquity of history revealed through Vedas and Epics stated with any certainty. I do believe that Dr S R Rao and Dr N Rajaram have made a compelling attempt at decipherment the script in the context of Vedic language. (*Rao S R 1991, & Rajaram, 2014*) Identical Seals and Sealings have been excavated from Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Kalibhangan, Banawali, Dholavira and many other sites. Many of these seals directly establish the concordance between the Mahabharat text and Harappan archaeology. Some examples are given below –

Shanti Parva, **8/342/88:** Lord Krishna said to Arjun that the holy Dharma is known by the name Vrisha, i.e. Bull. That is why Lord Krishna is called Excellent Vrisha, known as Nighantuk in Vedic Dictionary. See the Harappan Seal with that depiction (*Rajaram, 2014; I-SERVE Seminar*).

Seal depicting Bull from Mohenjodaro (Rajaram, 2014)

Seal depicting Bull from Harappa (Rajaram, 2014)

Shanti Parva 8/342/93: Lord Krishna said to Arjun that he assumed the form of a powerful boar with three humps. At that time, he had three humps on his back. On account of this peculiarity of form, he was also called a Trikkud, i.e. three-humped. Look at these three animal-headed mudras found from most of the Harappan sites dated as belonging to the Mahabharat era *(Rajaram, 2014; I-SERVE Seminar)* -

Seals depicting three animal-headed motif, Mohenjo-Daro and Kalibangan (Lal and Thapar 2003)

Shanti Parva 8/342/92: Lord Krishna said to Arjun that he assumed the form of a powerful boar with a single tusk and raised the submerged earth from the bottom of the ocean. Therefore, he was called by the name Ekashringa. See the Harappan Seal with that depiction (Rajaram, 2014; I-Serve Seminar) -

Seal with a unicorn/ Ekashringa from Lothal

Seal with a unicorn/ Ekashringa from Kalibangan

The concordance between the *Mahabharata* text and inscriptions on the Harappan seals is evident from many more examples. There are mentions in the *Mahabharata* of the Goddess Durga, who kills the demon Mahishasura (literally means 'buffalo-shaped demon') several times, particularly in Virata Parva. This is depicted on a seal found from Harappa –

Figure: Durga slaying Mahishasura, the buffalo demon. To the right of her is seated a person in a yoga posture, who is most probably Shiva. (Ref.: Material - terracotta, Dimensions - 3.91 length, 1.6 cm width; Lot 4651-01 Harappa Museum, H95-2486, Meadow and Kenoyer 1997.) The discoverers of the seal, being non-Indians, had probably no idea of the story of the buffalo demon Mahishasura, and have thus failed to identify the correlation.

There are repeated references in Mahabharat to worship of fire god. Seals depicting such scenes have been excavated in large numbers from different sites –

Mohenjodaro seal: with motif of the fire god, adored by a devotee and seven worshippers below

It would probably be interesting to have one look at the collection of steatite seals from Dholavira; similar ones were found from other sites (*after Agrawal 2007*) -

Steatite seals from Dholavira (after Agrawal 2007)

In the words of Shri *D P Agrawal (2007)*, "In its sheer magnitude, in a 3rd millennium BCE context, the Indus Civilization or Harappan Culture was a unique phenomenon in the History of the world. Not only in its wide distribution, but it is unique also in its well-planned towns. Town Planning seems to be an Indus concept. It was distributed over an area more than a million sq km, far larger than the Egyptian or the Mesopotamian civilizations".... The Indus civilization exploited a more extensive range of ecological resources: riverine, intermontane and coastal. From the border of Iran, its geographical distribution extends along the Arabian Sea Coast, to Gujarat and further South, northward even beyond Lahore and up to the Oxus river...."

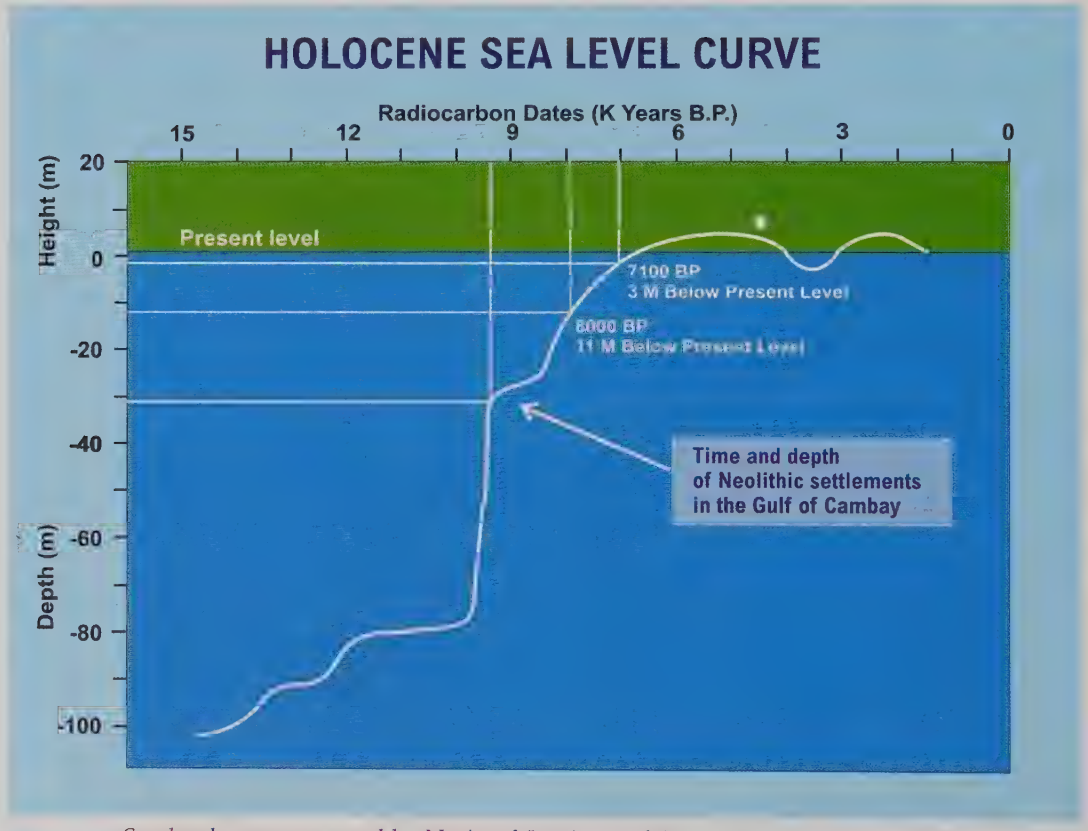
It has to be appreciated that a large number of scientific studies with regard to the environment, sea-level changes or neo-tectonic activities, conducted independently of archaeology, have a strong bearing on archaeology. These help us in understanding what happened in the past in relation to change in landscape, seascape, climate and environment in general. Astronomical references in Vedas and Epics used for generating the corresponding sky views using modern planetarium softwares have made it possible to determine the exact dates of events recorded in those ancient texts.

Astronomical references in Rigveda represent the sky views of important dates from 7000 BCE to 5500 BCE (*Ashok Bhatnagar, 2012*), whereas, planetary references in Valmiki Ramayan reflect sky views observed sequentially on dates around 5100 BCE (*Saroj Bala, 2019*). Astronomical references of 'Mahabharata' could be seen sequentially in the sky around 3100 BCE (*Saroj Bala, 2017*), the comprehensive details of which have been included in this book which is in the hands of the reader. At Mehrgarh cotton thread, stringing copper beads have been found from the stratum dateable to 6000 BCE. Cotton thread from Bhirrana and Kunal was found datable to around 5000-4000 BCE.

The period assigned to Yajurveda is 5500-2500 BCE (*Kazans 2009, Priyadarshi 2014*). Early farming phase corresponded with the composition of early Rigvedic mantras, which slowly evolved into the Village economy by Yajur-veda times and beginning of urban culture by Ramayan era around 5000 BCE. By 3100 BCE in Mahabharat times, this Vedic Harappan civilization was moving towards its peak of glory with advanced urban life and a perfect mix of the rural and urban economy. This was the time when Shatapatha Brahman was being composed, if we compare the crops and climatic conditions unearthed with references contained therein and if we determine the astronomical dates of references in Shatapatha Brahman.

It is self-evident that climate had a significant role to play in waxing and waning of an ancient civilization. It is now universally accepted that from 9000 BCE

to 7000 BCE, the glaciers melted, releasing enormous amounts of water, and the climate was cold and arid. From 6000 BCE, i.e. 8000 BP onwards a very wet, humid phase started which lasted till around 3500 BCE, i.e. 5500 BP, which is also described as the mid- Holocene climatic optima (*Priyadarshi 2014, Nigam 2012*). After that slowly there was a reduction in the rainfall. The Holocene sea-level changes have also been well-documented for the Western Coast of India. The sea level was higher from 6000 to 4000 years BP (*Nigam 2012*). "Marine and terrestrial records document that the climate started shifting from humid to dry arid from 5000 BP and reached an arid phase by 3500 BP as is also proved by the Holocene Sea Level Curve prepared by NIO Goa (*Nigam, 2012*).



Sea-level curve prepared by National Institute of Oceanography; Nigam, 2012 (http://bit.ly/2r8ke1A)

The onset of arid climate around 3500 BP in the Indian subcontinent might have also been responsible for the weak summer monsoon rainfall. Drastic reduction in rainfall could have led to the collapse of Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga Civilization (Holocene Chronology by *P. Divakar Naidu, NIO, 1999*). The shortage of water led

to the people abandoning urban settlements and resettling in rural areas where water was available. Therefore, the references in Mahabharat to the destruction of Dwarka are only because of the Tsunami, and not because of the rise in sea level. This position further corroborates these findings. Recent archaeological discoveries indicate that the process of drying up of Sarasvati River started from around 3300 BCE and by around 1900 BCE it had become wholly ephemeral. This led to the collapse of the Vedic Harappan civilization that was principally located in the Sarasvati region, accounting for about 70 per cent of all the excavated Harappan sites.

An in-depth study of verses of Mahabharat would keep on reminding anyone about the reports on excavations carried out at almost all the Harappan sites of early and mature phases, in Indus as well as Sarasvati valleys. The similarity of samples and artefacts excavated from Harappan sites with the descriptions in Mahabharat is very realistic and intriguing. The lifestyle of Vedic Harappans revealed through the layout of excavated cities and villages, the excavated samples and artefacts matched almost precisely with the living style of the people of the Mahabharat era described in this Epic. However, the big challenge was how to determine the authenticity of these similarities and comparisons scientifically, credibly and convincingly? As a result, a Project was taken up for which research was done for more than 16 months; the objectives were:

1. To determine the exact modern-day location of provinces and kingdoms mentioned in Mahabharat and then compare these with the exact location of Early and Mature Harappan sites excavated in these kingdoms. While doing so most of the kingdoms referred to in Mahabharat, particularly those mentioned in chapters - 7, 19, 31, 53, 72, 82, 157 of Udyog Parva, chapters 6, 9, 10, 18, 20, 46, 47, 52, 68, 83, 112 of Bhishma Parva and chapters 15, 61, 66-68, 165 of Drona Parva were extracted and noted down to determine their nearly precise locations. Their latitudes and longitudes were noted down.

2. After that, the names of adjacent rivers, hills, towns etc. of respective kingdoms were traced out from the Mahabharat text, and then the route followed by their armies to reach Kurukshetra to participate in the war was also traced. The objective was to have some precision in determining the geographic locations of these kingdoms. Most of these kingdoms were located in northern Indian sub-continent, including those located in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Some were also located in the southern part of India. To do plotting of precise location using GPS, the names of modern districts falling in the territories of those Mahabharat kingdoms were

identified and recorded along with their geo-coordinates. Reference was also made to the locations given in some credible geographic dictionaries of ancient India, (Nundo Lal Dey, 1899; Cunningham, 1871).

3. Comprehensive list of important excavated Harappan sites (I prefer to call these Vedic Harappan or Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga Sites) was prepared. The sites which fell in the territory of Mahabharat kingdoms and which revealed Early Harappan or Mature Harappan features were separated. An attempt was made to read their original excavation reports, wherever available, along with initial research reports published in Puratattva, Purapravah, Indian Archaeology - A Review, and other books written by the archaeologists/ excavators of those sites. To get clarity and to ensure that there were no errors, facts were also gathered as well as verified through personal discussions with eminent archaeologists like *Dr B R Mani and Dr R S Bisht.*

4. By generating sky views of sequential astronomical references of Mahabharat, the date of war has been fixed in the year 3139 BCE. Therefore, the settlements, samples, artefacts excavated with carbon dating of 3500 BCE to 2600 BCE were listed because it was assumed that all these cultures and civilizations existed around 3000 BCE. Then those excavated items were identified which were found during excavations from multiple sites in the areas referred to in Mahabharat. These were separately listed for being included in this chapter. The outcome was astonishing, and even the readers would be surprised to look at this list, as they usually would not have attempted such comparison! The pictures of many such excavated samples, structures, and artefacts have also been included in this book.

5. Many of these items excavated match the descriptions in Rigveda; the astronomical references of Rigveda have been dated 7000 BCE to 5500 BCE. Many others match the references in Ramayan, the astronomical dating of which is of around 5100 BCE. However, a large number of these excavated samples and artefacts match the descriptions in Mahabharat, the astronomical dates of which place the war in 3139 BCE; thus relating the Mahabharat to 3100 BCE. Many of the excavated settlements and samples match descriptions of Atharvaveda, the astronomical dates of which place it as belonging to 2300 BCE. However, the fact remains that most of these items are still in use in India and that their style and structure have marked similarities with the pre-Mahabharat, post-Mahabharat and modern-day products.

All these research outputs led to the conclusion that most of the so-called Early Harappan and Mature Harappan sites belonged to the Mahabharat era. They were part of those kingdoms which participated in that most disastrous war ever fought in the history of humanity. The Kshatriya kings from all over India were keen to fight on behalf of Pandavas or Kauravas because of the prevailing belief that a Kshatriya who loses his life while fighting in the battlefield in Kurukshetra goes to heaven. **For the convenience of the readers, a map has also been prepared, plotting the kingdoms which participated in the Mahabharat war, along with the location of excavated sites within those kingdoms. This helps in determining the antiquity of the existence of those kingdoms, along with the carbon dates of samples and artefacts excavated from within their territories.**

The final lists prepared following this methodology and the Map are given in the next chapter, along with all relevant details.

(This chapter has been written for general readers, not having much knowledge of archaeology, and has been accordingly edited, amended and improved by Dr R S Bisht (Padma Shri), an eminent archaeologist)

CHAPTER 48

Location and profile of kingdoms which fought on behalf of Kauravas and Pandavas

Kingdoms which fought on behalf of Kauravas during Mahabharat war –

1. The Kuru Kingdom consisted of three geographic zones, namely Kuru, Kurukshetra and Kuru Jangal (Adi Parva, 1/108/1). All together comprising the Western UP, Haryana and Ghaggar Valley in North Rajasthan. It was located on west and east of Yamuna, touching Drishadvati (Sarasvati) in the west and Ganga in the East; Hastinapur (in Meerut District of UP) was its capital. Dhritarashtra was the king, but he was blind; therefore, Duryodhana was the real Ruler. Important excavated sites falling in this kingdom included - Rakhigarhi (Hisar District, Haryana), Banawali (Fatehabad District), Bhirrana, Kunal (both in Hisar District), Hastinapur (Meerut District, UP), Alamgirpur (Meerut District of UP), Mitathal (Bhiwani District of Haryana), Mandi in Muzzaffarnagar district of western Uttar Pradesh, Sanauli in Baghpat District also in Western Uttar Pradesh. The other sites of this kingdom excavated are Kalibangan (Rajasthan), Baror, Binjor, and Ratnapura.
2. Balkh in Afghanistan - King Balhika, brother of Kuru king Shantanu and uncle of Bhishma Pitamah, took part in war from the Kaurava side, along

with his son Somdatta and grandson Bhurishrava. The kingdom included Mazar-e-Sharif, Samangan, Jowzjan and Kunduz provinces of Afghanistan. The Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex (in short BMAC) is the modern archaeological designation for the Mahabharat age civilization of this area dated to third millennia BCE. It is located in present-day northern Afghanistan, eastern Turkmenistan, and southern Uzbekistan. It was known as Bakhtiari in Avesta. Bactria was the Greek name for Balkh, in what is now northern Afghanistan. It would not be out of place to mention that Hemphill and Christensen (1994) had also concluded that gene inflow was primarily from Indus Valley into Bactria.

3. Kamboja, situated around modern-day Kabul, was located on the banks of river Kabul. In Kamboja, the urban civilization had begun as early as around 3000 BCE, in the city of Mundigak, adjacent to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. It was probably the capital of King Kamboja during Mahabharat era. This kingdom included Kabul and Bamian areas of Afghanistan.

4. Gandhara was situated between Rivers Sindhu and Kabul, also covered middle parts of Jammu & Kashmir, including Pushkalavat (Peshawar Distt) and Taxila (Rawalpindi capital city) of Pakistan. Excavated sites include Sarai Khola in Taxila, Charsadda in Pushkalavat. Jalalabad District of Afghanistan was also a part of its territory. Gandhar was, at that time, ruled by the Indian ruler named Subala, and his sons, including Shakuni. Subala's daughter Gandhari had been married to Dhritarashtra, and she was the mother of Duryodhana.

5. Kaikeya was located between Rivers Vitasta (Jhelum) and Chandrabhaga (Chenab). This kingdom included Jhelum, Gujarat and Sargodha districts of West Pakistan. Jalilpur is an important excavated site of this kingdom.

6. Madra-desh was situated between Chandrabhaga (Chenab) and Iravati (Ravi) Rivers. Sialkot was in its territory and probably was its capital. This province included Gujranwala, Sahiwal and Shekhopura areas of Pakistan and parts of Jammu region of India. The most famous archaeological site of Harappa (in Sahiwal district of Punjab in Pakistan) was probably a part of this kingdom.

7. Sindhu-Sauvira was located along Indus river, covered province of Sindh, part of Balochistan province of Pakistan and the Bahawalpur area on the Sarasvati (Hakra). This was the most ancient kingdom, which is also mentioned in Ramayan that is in around 5100 BCE. Duryodhana's sister

Dushala was married to Jayadratha, powerful king of Sindhu-Sauvira. The excavated sites include Mehrgarh (Kachhi Distt, Balochistan, Pak), Nausharo (Kachhi Distt, Balochistan, Pak), Mohenjodaro (Larkana Distt, Sindh, Pak), Kot Diji, Amri and Chanhudaro (all three in Sindh province of Pakistan).

8. Salva Tribe was a famous tribe associated with the Madras and the Matsyas, spread over parts of Western India from River Yamuna to Sindh. The Salva kingdom in the story of Savitri was adjacent to Kuru-Panchala and lay between Rivers Yamuna and Sindh. They fought on the side of the Kauravas (VI. 18.13, VI.20.12). Excavated sites include Sothi in Rajasthan and Siswal in Distt. Hisar of Haryana.

9. Trigarta (located north of Matsya Desh), probably included Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts of Punjab; and also the areas of Jawalamukhi, Kangra, Dharmashala, and Baijnath in Himachal Pradesh. It was located between Ravi and Sutlej Rivers. There were five powerful princes ruling over this province. They were major allies of the Kauravas and had even attacked Matsya kingdom to support Duryodhana for capturing Pandavas before completion of one year of incognito living (VI.47.7).

10. Panchanad, place of five rivers, was located in Punjab area of the Indian subcontinent. It consisted of Bahawalpur and Multan areas of Southern Punjab province of Pakistan. Ganweriwala is an important explored site of the size of Mohenjo-Daro. They sided with the Kuru army (VI.52.5; VI.20.10).

11. Mahishmati (located in Madhya Pradesh, on banks of Narmada). In the War, their King Nila fought in support of Duryodhana (V.19). The most important part of this kingdom was Omkareshwar Mandhata which is a hilly island in the Narmada and was probably the capital of Mahishmati. The famous excavated sites are Maheshwar and Nandatole, although their carbon dates are of later period.

12. Avanti was located on the banks of Narmada River. It consisted of Western Malwa area of the modern state of Madhya Pradesh; Ujjain was its capital, which is a significant pilgrimage centre till date. Vinda and Anuvinda ruled over it; they wanted to take revenge from Sahadev, who had defeated them when he went to win support for Yudhishthir's Rajasuya Yajna. They supported Kauravas during the war. Excavations done at Ujjain and Nagada are of great significance.

13. Saurashtra was a peninsular region of Gujarat, located on the Arabian Sea coast which is also known as Bolan Coast. Kritavarman, chief of the Andhaka tribe of Yadavas, led one Akshauhini force and fought for Kauravas. It consisted of districts like Jamnagar, Rajkot, Veraval, Ahmedabad, and Kutch of Gujarat. Important excavated sites include Lothal (Ahmedabad Distt of Gujarat), Rangpur (3698 - 2991 BCE), Padri (Bhavanagar Distt, 3680-3048 BCE) and Sorath sites of Kuntasi, Rojdi, and Golo Dhora. C14 dates suggested the period around the middle of 4th millennium BCE to the first half of 3rd millennium BCE (Sonawane, 2005). The most important excavated sites include Dholavira, situated in Kutch district; Lothal in Ahmedabad District; Padri in Bhavanagar District of Gujarat.

14. Pragjyotishapura included modern-day Gauhati area in northeastern India. Its powerful king Bhagadatta was a great warrior; he was inimical to Arjun as he had defeated him earlier to collect tribute for Yudhishthir's Rajasuya Yajna. Some significant archaeological sites include Surya Pahar in Northwest of Guwahati, Dah Parvatiya Village located to the west of Tezpur, Daojali Hading in Dima Hasao District of Assam. However, the archaeologists believe that the capital of Pragjyotishpur is buried under Guwahati, but excavations are difficult due to the high underground water level.

15. Koshal kingdom in Uttar Pradhesh from Ayodhya to Shravasti extended up to Ganga. Brihadbala was the Suryavanshi Ruler and also a great warrior. It consisted of Shravasti, Gonda, Sant Kabir Nagar, and Ayodhya districts of UP. Archaeological excavations carried out at Lahuradeva in Distt. Sant Kabir Nagar, Ayodhya (below and around the erstwhile Babri structure) and Sahet-Mahet in district Shravasti, of UP, have related these settlements to Mahabharat era.

16. Kalinga was located between Mahanadi and Godavari Rivers in modern-day Odisha and Andhra regions. The daughter of the king of Kalinga, named Bhanumati, was married to Duryodhana. The ancient site is Sisupalgarh, a ruined fortification in Khurda District in Odisha, located near Bhubneshwar. It is one of the most extensive and best-preserved early historical fortifications in Odisha. Excavations at Gopalpur and Golbai-Sasan revealed crops of rice, millets and pulses *etc.* dated as more than 4600 years old.

17. Andhras - A very ancient tribe mentioned as Dasyus, who fought on behalf of Duryodhana; located between Godawari and Krishna Rivers, included Andhra and Telangana areas (VII.18)

Kingdoms plotted on Map, which fought on behalf of Pandavas during Mahabharat war –

18. Indraprastha was located in and around Delhi and also included surrounding areas of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. It was given as half share of Kuru kingdom to Pandavas and Yudhishthir became the king. The Pandavas worked very hard and made it prosperous. River Yamuna was flowing nearby. Excavations at Purana Quila in Delhi, Farmana and Girawad in Rohtak District of Haryana are relevant.

19. Dwarka: There is no consensus about the exact location of Shri Krishna's Dwarka; either the sea destroyed the evidence or the real Dwarka, located somewhere in Junagarh Distt, has not yet been explored/excavated. A senior scientist with the Space Application Centre of ISRO, Dr P S Thakker, had said that if satellite imagery is compared with the descriptions of Dwarka in Mahabharat, then neither the submerged city explored by Dr Rao nor the existing Dwarka city could be categorized as Krishna's Dwarka. Based on remote sensing imagery, Thakker claimed that real Dwarka was located in Junagarh Distt. of Gujarat. He added that the presence of Nevada village and milollite limestone found in the vicinity of Girnar in Junagadh suggest the presence of the sea in this area in the remote past. Related excavated sites so far are Dwarka & Parabhas Patan (2911 - 2892 BC).

20. Matsya Desh was situated around Chambal River areas in modern-day Rajasthan. Its capital was Viratanagar and king Virat, a great friend of Pandavas, was the ruler. Pandavas had spent one year of their life in disguise in this capital city. The area of this kingdom included Jaipur, Bharatpur and Alwar regions of Rajasthan and Cholistan region of Pakistan. Important excavated sites include Baror (Sri Ganganagar Distt of Rajasthan), Girwad and Viratanagar (Jaipur Distt); Bhim ki Dungari and Kichak's palace are also situated here in Viratanagar.

21. Panchal touched Kuru kingdom's border and was divided into two states, viz. Uttara Panchal and Dakshin Panchal, which lay between the Tarai and the Chambal; Ganga divided it into two parts. Panchal consisted of Bareilly and Farrukhabad districts of Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Uttarakhand. It was ruled over by king Drupad, whose daughter Draupadi (Panchali) was married to the five Pandava brothers after Arjun won her during Swayamvar. At the time of Swayamvar Pandavas were living in a potter's house hiding their identity. Drupad's son Dhrishtadhyumna was the commander-in-chief of the Pandava army and

was instrumental in killing the great warrior Drona. Three important excavated sites, which are considered to be part of ancient Panchal kingdom are Kannauj (in Uttar Pradesh), Kampilya (Farrukhabad Distt.) and Ahichhatra (Bareilley Distt.), all in Uttar Pradesh.

22. Vatsa Desh consisted of a famous tribe of soldiers. They were living around the Sangam area. A developed ancient city named Kaushambi, adjacent to modern Allahabad was probably the kingdom (VI. 10.39). Vatsa kingdom Included districts of Allahabad, Kaushambi and Chitrakut in UP. They sided with Yudhishthir in the War (VI.50.51). Significant sites excavated belonging to this kingdom are Jhusi, Hetapatti and Kaushambi.

23. Dasharna was possibly located between Betwa and Son Rivers. It was situated towards the south of Sangam; Ganga was on its north, and Vindhya hills were towards the south (VI.10.39). It probably included Guna district of MP & Lalitpur and Ghazipur districts of UP. Excavated sites are Tokwa in District Ghazipur of UP and Koldihwa in District Allahabad – both in Vindhya Region.

24. Chedidesh was located towards the south of Yamuna and along the Ken River; it also consisted of Bundelkhand area of Madhya Pradesh The king of Chedi-desh, named Shishupal, was killed by Lord Krishna during Yudhishthir's Rajsuya Yajna for being abusive and extremely offending. Shishupal's son Dhrishtaketu was crowned as the king. He sided with the Pandavas during the war. The Chedi kingdom consisted of Bhopal, Sagar and Raisen districts of MP. Located about 46 km south of Bhopal, Bhimabetka caves are in Raisen district of MP, and these are considered as connected to the Pandavas. These have a valuable repository of the prehistoric art and architecture of India, having rock shelters and paintings of the period 5000 BCE to 500 BCE. Eran and Tripuri are the related excavated sites.

25. Kashi has been an ancient kingdom, mentioned even in Ramayan. It probably consisted of Varanasi, Chandauli, Jaunpur and Ghazipur districts of UP, touching the borders of Bihar. Since times immemorial Kashi, located on the banks of Ganga, remains a famous pilgrimage centre. In modern times it is known by the name Varanasi. Three daughters of Kashi king were abducted by Bhishma to get them married to Kuru king Vichitravirya, son of Shantanu. Ambika and Ambalika were duly married and gave birth to Dhritarashtra and Pandu, but Amba remained unsettled and unmarried. Kashi king wanted to take revenge

from Bhishma Pitamah; he, therefore, sided with Pandavas. Excavations at Rajghat have revealed that there has been an undisrupted occupation of Kashi region since Vedic times (Ref: Vidula, the archaeologist).

26. Kunti Puri: Kunti, wife of Emperor Pandu and mother of Pandava brothers, hailed from this kingdom. It was situated on the banks of river Ashwanadi, which joined Chambal. It was located towards the north of Avanti and probably included Morena, Gohad and Gwalior Regions of Madhya Pradesh. Limited excavations were carried out at Kutwar in Morena district, just about 40 kilometres from Gwalior in MP. This is believed to be the birthplace of Kunti.

27. Dravida was situated in the area between Chennai and Cape Comorin. Kanchipuram was believed to be its capital (VI.10.57). The people of this tribe joined the Pandavas during the war (Ganguli -viii.8.14).

28. Magadh: a part of ancient Magadh kingdom, located in modern Bihar fought on behalf of Pandavas. It had a mighty king, named Jarasandh, who had defeated and chased many kings out of their kingdoms. Bhima had killed Jarasandha with support from Lord Krishna. After that, Jarasandha's son Sahadev was installed as the king. Its capital was Girivraja (Rajgir). Sahadev, with his armies, supported Pandavas in the War. However, his brother Jalasandha and many soldiers of Magadha sided with the Kauravas (V.64.6, 164.9). Magadh was a vast province and included most parts of Bihar. Important excavated sites include Chirand (Saran District), Sonepur (Gaya, Bihar), Taradih (Gaya, Bihar), Rajgir (Nalanda, Bihar), Vaishali (District Vaishali Bihar) and Panr or Pandav Sthan (Samastipur Distt.). From these places bone arrowheads, brick structures, steatite beads, terracotta, iron objects and redware etc. have been found dated as belonging to 4500 BCE to 600 CE. The locals believe that Pandavas had stayed there, particularly in Panr.

Some other most important places mentioned in Mahabharat –

29. Kurukshetra formed a part of the ancient Kuru kingdom and was situated between Sarasvati and Drishadvati (along modern-day Ghaggar). It provided the battlefield for Mahabharat war. Kurukshetra was chosen as the battlefield because in those days it was the prevailing belief that whoever died in Kurukshetra, he would go to the highest heavens. Even Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti had gone to live in Kurukshetra during their last days for their penance. In its territory were included present-day Kurukshetra, Thanesar, Sonepat, Panipat and Sirhind, *etc.*;

Naimisharanya touched its boundary. Important sites excavated are Kunal (Fatehabad Distt), Banawali (Fatehabad Distt), Bhirrana (Fatehabad Distt), Rakhigarhi (Hissar) and some other smaller sites like Balu, Thanesar and Karan ka Tilla in Kurukshetra district. The carbon dating of excavated samples and artefacts firmly establish the link of these sites with the Mahabharat era which belonged to 3100 BC.

30. Badrinath is located in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand and forms part of the sacred Char Dham. Badrika Ashram was the temple of Nar-Narayan, built on the banks of Bishen Ganga that is Alaknanda in Badrinath. On their way to heaven, the Pandavas passed through Badrinath and reached the town of Mana. There is also a cave in Mana where Sage Vyas, according to the legend, composed the Mahabharat. There are references in Mahabharat recording that Sage Vyas composed the life history of Kauravas and Pandavas while staying at Badrinath. It is a hilly settlement and therefore not easy to excavate.

31. Varanavat is situated in modern-day Western Uttar Pradesh. From this place, the foundations of the Mahabharat war were laid. After completion of training of Pandu and Kuru princes under Dronacharya, a grand royal display of the expertise of princes was organized. Arjun was applauded for his exceptional proficiency. Yudhishthir, being the eldest and the noblest was installed as the crown prince. Duryodhana suffered from extreme jealousy. A conspiracy was hatched, and Pandu princes were sent to Varanavat. Duryodhana got constructed a Lac Palace at this place to burn Pandavas alive; however, they escaped. Recent excavations at Sanauli by an eminent archaeologist, Dr Manjul have revealed some warriors buried with their chariots, swords, daggers and chalice made of copper. The site of Lakshagriha, i.e. Barnava (Varnavat) is located 21 km in the east.

32. Prabhas, also known as Somnath, having the most famous Jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva, was the most well-known pilgrimage centre on the banks of Sarasvati River. Balaram started his pilgrimage for 42 days from this place. Prabhas is located in the coastal regions of Saurashtra in Gujarat, near Dwarka. Bhalka Tirtha, from where Krishna ascended heaven, is found here. It continues to be the most venerated pilgrimage centre on the banks of Sarasvati River. Some important excavated sites include Dwarka, Prabhas-Patan and Padri.

33. Manipur situated in Northeast of India - Arjun's son Babhruvahan was born through Chitrangada, princess of Manipur in North-Eastern region of India. Since the king of Manipur did not have any male child, Babhruvahan became the ruler of Manipur. Babhruvahan had come to attend Ashwamedha yajna when Yudhishthir was crowned as the king after Mahabharat war. Excavations at Phunan Hills, Napachik, Nongpoh Keithelmandi in Manipur have revealed limited samples and artefacts dated earlier than 4500 BP (Hazarika, 2006).

34. Junagarh district is located at the foot of Girnar Hills in Gujarat. Raivatak was a part of this hill range, which was a part of / touching the then Dwarka. Arjun carried away Subhadra, sister of Krishna and Balaram, from Raivatak Hill and later married her. Her son Abhimanyu was a great warrior but was killed at a very young age during the Mahabharat war. Her grandson Parikshit had succeeded Yudhishthir as the king of Hastinapur. Many scientists from ISRO believe that Krishna's real Dwarka was located in this district. Many Mahabharat references also support this belief because Prabhas in Mahabharat times was a coastal town, very near to Dwarka of those days (Mausala Parva, 2/23,24 & 3/10). It is well known that sea level at that time, i.e. around 5000 years back was a little higher than at present. Consequently, places like Lothal and parts of Junagarh might have been on the sea coast.

35. Vinashana was an important pilgrimage centre on the banks of Sarasvati during Mahabharat days. Just before the beginning of Mahabharat war, Balaram had gone on pilgrimage along Sarasvati River for 42 days. He noticed that Sarasvati had disappeared in the sands of the desert at this place. The archaeologists have identified this place with Kalibangan, which is located in Hanumangarh Distt. of Rajasthan.

A chart containing names of significant kingdoms, which fought on behalf of Kauravas or Pandavas during the Mahabharat war, has been prepared. Along with the name of the kingdom, the archaeological sites falling in their respective territories, have also been listed. The corresponding references to empires are available in Mahabharat - Chapters 7, 19, 31, 53, 72, 82, 157 of Udyoga Parva, Chapters 6, 9, 10, 18, 20, 46, 47, 52, 68, 83, 112 of Bhishma Parva and Chapters 15, 61, 66-68, 165 of Drona Parva. Their present-day locations with geo-coordinates have been added. The latitudes and longitudes of archaeological sites located in these kingdoms, having radiocarbon dates of 3500-2600 BCE, have also been included in this very chart.

KINGDOMS WHICH FOUGHT ON BEHALF OF KAURAVAS IN MAHABHARAT WAR

Sr. No.	Name & location of the kingdom mentioned in Mahabharat	Approximate Modern-day location with Latitudes and Longitudes of the main district	Archaeological sites excavated in the respective kingdoms, with C14 dates of 3500-2600 BCE
1	The Kuru Kingdom on West and East of Yamuna, touching Sarasvati on the west and Ganga in the East, Capital was Hastinapur. It consisted of 3 regions, namely Kuru, Kurukshetra and Kurujangal.	In and around Meerut District, including parts of Western UP, Haryana and Ghaggar Valley in North Rajasthan. (77.9470°E, 29.4337°N)	Important sites are - Rakhigarhi and Kunal in Hisar Distt of Haryana, Banawali in Fatehabad, Sanauli in Baghpat Dist of UP, Hastinapur and Alamgirpur in Meerut district of UP, Mandi in Muzaffarnagar District of UP.
2	Balkh (Balhika) - Balhika, brother of Kuru king Shantanu was the ruler. It was located in northern Afghanistan.	Consisted of present-day northern Afghanistan, Eastern Turkmenistan, & southern Uzbekistan. Included Mazar-e-Sharif, Samangan, Jowzjan and Kunduz provinces of Afghanistan (69.7581° E, 35.2432° N)	The Bactria–Margiana Archaeo Complex (BMAC) has revealed a Bronze Age civilization dated to around 2800-2600 BCE, which is a synthesis of features of sites along Indus. Bactria was the Greek name for Balkh (Jarrige).
3	Kamboja located on the Northern banks of River Kabul in Afghanistan – Sudakshina was the King.	Was located around modern-day Kabul, included Kabul, Bamian, and Kandahar areas of Afghanistan (72.4904°E, 34.0650°N).	Mundigak (excavated near Kandahar in southern Afghanistan).
4	Gandhara was located between Rivers Indus and Kabul; was ruled by Subala, Gandhari's father. Shakuni was his son.	Included Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts of Pakistan and Jalalabad district of Afghanistan (70.9445°E, 33.0307°N).	Sarai Khola in Takshashila (District Rawalpindi), Charsadda in Pushkalavat (District Peshawar) of Pakistan.

5	Kaikeya, located between Rivers Vitasta (Jhelum) and Chandr-abhaga (Chenab) – Five brothers were the kings.	This kingdom included Jhelum, m, Gujarat and Sargodha districts of West Pakistan (73.1675°E, 32.6057°N	Jalilpur in District Jhelum, Punjab Province of Pakistan.
6	Madra-desh was located between Chandrabhaga (Chenab) & Iravati (Ravi) – Shalya, maternal Uncle of Nakul and Sahadev, was the King.	Sialkot was probably its capital; included parts of Jammu (India) parts of Gujranwala, Sahiwal, & Shekhupura areas of Pakistan (73.3379°E, 30.8228°N)	Harappa in Sahiwal district of Punjab province of Pakistan
7	Sindhu-Sauvira, located on western banks of Indus river – Jayadratha, married to Duryodhana's sister Dushala, was the King	Sindh province and parts of Balochistan province of Pakistan, including Larkana and Kachhi districts (68.3333°E, 27.9166°N)	Mehrgarh and Nausharo in Kachhi District, earlier known as Bolan, in Balochistan, Mohenjodaro in Larkana of Sindh Province, Kotdiji in Khasirpur District of Sindh) – all are located in Pakistan
8	The Salva kingdom, associated with Madras & Matsya; situated in the plains of ancient Chautang, which was flowing east to west in this area	It was adjacent to Kuru-Panchala, located in parts of western Haryana and Rajasthan, and Siswal in District Hisar of Haryana (75.5165°E, 28.9753°N)	Excavations revealed pre-Harappan sites at Sothi in Rajasthan and Siswal in District Hisar of Haryana
9	Trigart -was located between the Ravi and Sutlej; they were major allies of Kauravas. These were ruled over by five princes.	Included Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur areas of Punjab; Jawalmukhi, Kangra and Dharamshala areas of Himachal Pradesh (76.5518°E, 31.7431°N)	

10	Panchanada, place of five rivers located in Punjab areas of Pakistan in the Indian subcontinent	Consisted of Bahawalpur and Multan areas of Southern Punjab in Pakistan (71.6911°E, 29.3544°N)	Explorations have revealed a very advanced site at Ganweriwala, almost as big as Mohenjodaro, which is still waiting to be excavated
11	Mahishmati located in Madhya Pradesh, on banks of Narmada, the ruler was King Nila	The city named Omkareshwar Mandhata, a hilly island in the Narmada was probably its capital (76.1510°E, 22.2456°N)	It was a hilly island in the Narmada. Maheshwar and Nandatole are two excavated sites, but carbon dates are later than the Mahabharat period.
12	Avanti was located on the banks of Narmada River. Ujjain was the capital - Vinda, Anuvinda were the rulers	Western Malwa area in MP. Capital Ujjain is a famous pilgrimage centre still known by the same name (75.6491°E, 22.2723°N).	Excavations at Ujjain and Nagada are significant.
13	Saurashtra - a peninsular region of Gujarat, located on the Arabian Sea coast - Kritavarman, chief of Andhaka tribe of Yadavas was the ruler	Other than the coastal regions falling under Dwarka, it consisted of districts like Jamnagar, Rajkot, Veraval, and Junagarh of Gujarat (70.7624° E, 21.9409°N).	Padri (Bhavanagar district of Gujarat), Lothal - a coastal settlement at that time and Parabhas Patan (2911 - 2892 BCE)
14	Pragjyotishapura (modern-day Gauhati area in northeastern India) - King Bhagadatta was a great warrior	Included modern-day Guwahati, Tezpur areas of Assam (91.9526°E, 26.3472°N).	Surya Pahar and Ambari located in NW of Guwahati, are important excavated sites. Excavations have revealed significant remains of ancient times, but earlier strata are difficult to excavate as these are buried under deep water levels.
14	Koshal kingdom (in Uttar Pradhesh from Ayodhya to Shravasti) - Brihadbala of Suryavansh was the king	Consisted of Shravasti, Gonda and Ayodhya districts of UP (82.0365°E, 27.5035°N).	Excavated sites include Lahuradeva, Ayodhya, Shravasti, Sahet-Mahet

17	Andhras - located between Godawari and Krishna Rivers; a very ancient tribe named Dasyus fought on behalf of Duryodhana	Included parts of modern-day Andhra and Telangana areas like Hyderabad, Guntur and Anantpur (79.8708°E, 17.2407°N)	

KINGDOMS WHICH FOUGHT ON BEHALF OF PANDAVAS IN MAHABHARAT WAR

18	Indraprastha located in and around Delhi – Pandava King Yudhishthir ruled from this place	Located in and around modern-day Delhi and surrounding areas of Haryana and UP (76.9992°E, 28.7557°N).	Excavations at Purana Quila (Delhi), Farmana (Rohtak Distt), Girawad (Rohtak Distt).
19	Dwarka: There is no consensus about the exact location of Shri Krishna's Dwarka; either the sea destroyed the evidence or the real Dwarka, probably located in Junagarh district, has not yet been excavated (Dr Thakker of ISRO)	Included coastal areas of Dwarka, Bet Dwarka, Porbandar, Prabhas, and Junagarh districts of Gujarat (69.1874°E, 22.1395°N)	Excavated sites are Dwarka & Prabhas. The adjacent excavated site of Dholavira in Rann of Kutch could be considered as revealing cultural achievements and living standards of Mahabharat times. Milollite limestone found in Navda in Junagarh reveals some kind of link with ancient Dwarka.
20	Matsya Desh located around Chambal River areas in Rajasthan; Capital city was Viratanagar, and King Virat was the ruler	Included Jaipur, Bharatpur, Alwar Regions of Rajasthan; also included parts of Cholistan region of Pakistan (75.5588°E, 26.0177°N).	Viratanagar in Jaipur Distt – ancient Bhim ki Dungari and Kichak's Palace are located here
21	Panchal, located between the Tarai region and River Charmanwati (Chambal); touched borders of Kuru kingdom and was divided by Ganga in Northern and southern Panchal	Consisted of Bareilly and Farrukhabad districts of Uttar Pradesh and parts of Uttarakhand (79.7739°E, 27.9109°N).	Excavated sites: Kannoj, Ahichhatra (Bareilley Distt of UP) and Kampilya (Farrukhabad, UP)

22	Vatsa desh: Located around the Sangam area. They sided with Yudhishthir in the War	It consisted of districts of Prayagraj (earlier Allahabad), Kaushambi, and Chitrakut of UP (81.8948°E, 25.0291°N)	Excavated sites include Jhusi and Kaushambi.
23	Dasharna tribes; possibly located between Betwa and Son rivers: having Sangam towards North and Vindhyas towards South.	Probably included Guna district of MP and Lalitpur, Ghazipur of UP (78.0616°E, 24.6324°N)	
24	Chedi-desh was located between Yamuna and Narmada in Madhya Pradesh. .Its king Shishupal was killed by Shri Krishna and his son Dhrishtaketu sided with Yudhishthir	Consisted of Bhopal, Sagar, and Raisen districts of MP (77.3684°E, 23.3091°N)	Located about 46 km south of Bhopal, Bhimabetka caves are in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. These are rock-shelters and paintings dated as 5000 BCE to 500 BCE. Eran is an excavated site.
25	Kashi is located on banks of Ganga. Three daughters of Kashi king were forcibly taken away by Bhishma to get them married to Vichitravirya; Amba remained unsettled. So Kashi king sided with Pandavas.	Consisted of modern-day areas surrounding Varanasi in UP (82.2383°E, 24.6324°N)	Excavations at Rajghat have revealed that there has been an undisrupted occupation of Kashi region since Vedic times
26	Kunti Puri – Birthplace of Kunti, situated on the banks of river Ashwanadi, which joined Chambal. King Kuntibhoj sided with Pandavas who were his daughter's sons	Located towards the north of Avanti; consisted of Morena, Gohad and Gwalior regions of Madhya Pradesh (77.8649°E, 26.2882°N)	Limited excavations at Kutwar (birthplace of Kunti) in Morena district, just about 40 kilometres from Gwalior in MP

27	Dravida: Part of Deccan, from Chennai to Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari) area. They joined the Pandavas (Ganguli-viii.8.14).	Part of Deccan from Chennai to Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari) area; Kanchipuram was probably its capital (79.6947°E, 12.8185°N).	
28	Magadh in Bihar –After the death of Jarasandh, his son Jalasandh supported the Kauravas whereas the other son Sahadev, installed as ruler by Pandavas, supported them	Included major parts of Bihar like Patna, Gaya, Vaishali, Nalanda, and Bhagalpur (84.9554°E, 25.0554° N)	Excavated sites are Chirand (Saran Distt., Sonepur (Gaya, Bihar), Taradih (Gaya, Bihar), Rajgir (Distt. Nalanda, Bihar), Vaishali (Distt. Vaishali, Bihar) Pandav Sthan (Samastipur Distt.).

SOME OTHER MOST IMPORTANT PLACES MENTIONED IN MAHABHARATA

30	Kurukshetra provided the battlefield for Mahabharat war. Most of the provinces and kingdoms, which participated in the war, were situated around this place. They all treated it as a sacred place.	It was situated between Sarasvati and Drishadvati (modern-day Ghaggar); included Kurukshetra, Thanesar, Sonepat, and Panipat. Naimisharanya touched its boundary (76.9782°E, 30.0480°N)	Thanesar, and Karna ka Tilla in Kurukshetra
31	Badrinath is located on the banks of River Alaknanda. Badrika Ashrama, the temple of Nar-Narayan was built here. Sage Vyas composed Mahabharat, the life history of Kauravas and Pandavas, from this place.	Badrinath is located in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand; forms part of sacred Char Dham (79.5603°E, 30.2937°N).	Himalayan region; excavations are rather difficult

32	Varanavat–Duryodhana got constructed Wax Palace at this place to burn Pandavas alive.	Located near modern-day Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh, was probably part of Kuru kingdom (77.3621°E, 28.9814°N).	The most recent archaeological site of Sanauli (Baghpat Distt.) has yielded even chariots and swords buried with the warriors. Adjacent site of Barnawa (Varnavat of Mahabharat), 21 km east of Sanauli, has also yielded proto-historic samples & artefacts
33	Prabhas, also known as Somnath, having the most famous Jyotirlinga of Lord Shiva, was the renowned pilgrimage on the banks of Sarasvati. Balaram started his pilgrimage from here	Prabhas is located in the coastal regions of Saurashtra in Gujarat, near Dwarka. Bhalka Tirtha, from where Krishna ascended heaven, is located here (70.4060°E, 20.8882°N).	This is an excavated site within the territory the Dwarka of Mahabharat times
34	Manipur – Arjun's son Babhruvahan was born through princess Chitrangada; he became the ruler of Manipur in the North-Eastern region of India.	Manipur is located in the North-Eastern region of India (93.7059°E, 24.6594°N).	Excavations at Phunan Hills, Napachik, Nongpoh Keithelmandi in Manipur have revealed limited artefacts dated earlier than 4500 BP (Hazarika, 2006).
35	Junagarh: Arjun carried away Subhadra, sister of Krishna and Balaram, from Raivatak Hill of Junagarh and then married her. Her son Abhimanyu was a great warrior and her grandson Parikshit had succeeded Yudhishthir as the king of Hastinapur.	Junagarh is located in the foothills of Girnar hills in Gujarat. Raivatak was a part of this hill range (70.4579°E, 21.5222°N)	Scientists from ISRO believe that Lord Krishna's real Dwarka was situated in this district. It has Kushasthali, Raivtak Hills and evidence of milollite limestone in Navda village The place is also famous for rock inscriptions of Ashoka, Rudradaman,Sakandagupta

36	Vinashana: an important pilgrimage located at the confluence of the Drishadvati and Sarasvati rivers. During his pilgrimage, Balaram noticed that Sarasvati had disappeared in the sands of the desert at this place, revealing that Sarasvati was in the process of becoming ephemeral	Vinashan is identified with Kalibangan on Ghaggar-Hakra River, located in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan. It is also identified as being established in the triangle of land (74.0819°E, 29.4102°E)	A very important site of Kalibangan in Hanumangarh Distt of Rajasthan was excavated with samples and artefacts dated from around 3000 BCE. Dr B B Lal's report, published in 2003, revealed that the town must have been a significant provincial capital of Indus-Sarasvati civilization

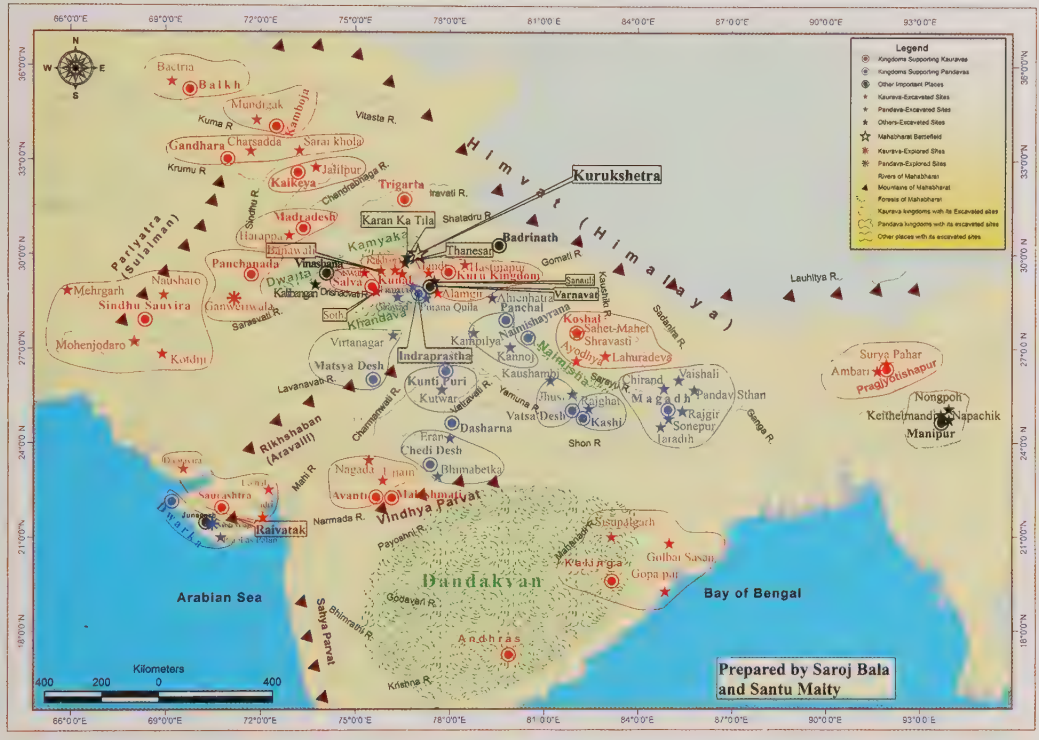
Almost all the above locations have been plotted on a map as under -

- The provinces and kingdoms which participated in the Mahabharat war in support of Kauravas are shown in **red colour**; those who supported the Pandavas are shown in **blue colour**. Some other famous places, mountains, rivers, and forests, have also been plotted on the Map in **black colour**.
- The excavated sites within the territories of these kingdoms, having carbon dates of excavated artefacts and samples of 3500 BCE to 2600 BCE, revealing that they formed part of Mahabharat kingdoms, have been plotted alongside each kingdom in matching colour. **The kingdom and its excavated sites have been encircled together; these encircles do not represent the boundaries of kingdoms.**
- All these kingdoms and the archaeological sites located therein have been plotted on the Map, giving exact longitude and latitudes. A list of these co-ordinates is provided hereunder.

66°0'0"E
69°0'0"E
72°0'0"E
75°0'0"E
78°0'0"E
81
36°0'0"N
33°0'0"N
30°0'0"N
27°0'0"N
24°0'0"N
21°0'0"N
18°0'0"N
N
W
E
S
Bactria
Balkh
Mundigak
Kamboja
Kuma R.
Vitasta R.
Gandhara
Charsadda
Sarai khola
Krumu R.
Jalilpur
Kaikeya
Chandrabhaga R.
Trigarta
Iravati R.
Himv
Sindhu R.
Madradesh
Harappa
Karan Ka Tila
Shatadru R.
Badri
Pariyatra (Sulaiman)
Kamyaka
Banawali
Thanesar
Panchanada
Vinashana
Rakhigarhi
Mandi
Hastinapur
Kuru Kingdon
Dwaita
Siswal
Salva
Kunal
Naushar
Mehrgarh
Kalibangan
Drishadvati R.
Alamgir
Ahichh
Sindhu Sauvira
Ganweriwala
Sarasvati R.
Sothi
Chirawad
Purana Quila
Panch
Khandava
Naimish
Virtanagar
Kampilya
Indraprastha
Kannoj
Mohenjodaro
Kotdiji
Matsya Desh
Kaush
Lavanavati R.
Kunti Puri
Kutwar
Charmanwati R.
Vetravati R.
Yamuna R.
Vatsa
Dasharna
Rikhshaban (Aravalli)
Eran
Chedi Desh
Dholavira
Nagada
Ujjain
Bhimabetka
Mahi R.
Lothal
Saurashtra
Avanti
Mahishmati
Vindhya Parvat
Padri
Junagarh
Narmada R.
Dwarka
Navda Village
Raivatak
Prabhas Patan
Payoshni R.
Dandakvan
Arabian Sea
Godavari R.
Sahya Parvat
Bhimrathi R.
Andhras
Kilometers
400
200
0
400
Krishna R.

Legend
Kingdoms Supporting Kauravas
Kingdoms Supporting Pandavas
Other Important Places
Kaurava-Excavated Sites
Pandava-Excavated Sites
Others-Excavated Sites
Mahabharat Battlefield
Kaurava-Explored Sites
Pandava-Explored Sites
Rivers of Mahabharat
Mountains of Mahabharat
Forests of Mahabharat
Kaurava kingdoms with its Excavated sites
Pandava kingdoms with its excavated sites
Other places with its excavated sites
84°0'0"E
87°0'0"E
90°0'0"E
93°0'0"E
36°0'0"N
33°0'0"N
30°0'0"N
27°0'0"N
24°0'0"N
21°0'0"N
18°0'0"N
Kurukshetra
(Himalaya)
Lauhitya R.
Kaushiki R.
Sadanira R.
Sanauli
Varnavat
Koshal
Sahet-Mahet
Shravasti
Ayodhya
Lahuradeva
Sarayu R.
Chirand
Vaishali
Magadh
Pandav Sthan
Rajghat
Kashi
Rajgir
Sonepur
Taradih
Shon R.
Ganga R.
Surya Pahar
Ambari
Pragjyotishapur
Nongpoh
Keithelmandi
Napachik
Manipur
Sisupalgarh
Mahanadi R.
Golbai Sasan
Kalinga
Gopalpur
Bay of Bengal
Prepared by Saroj Bala
and Santu Maity

Map depicting GPS plotting of excavated Harappan sites located in the territories of kingdoms which fought on behalf of Kauravas or Pandavas during Mahabharat war



*(This Map in 24 cm * 34 cm size is inserted here with one fold)*

Geo Co-ordinates of the kingdoms which fought during the Mahabharat War, along with their excavated sites

Kingdoms which fought for Kauravas (in red colour)

Name	Longitude	Latitude
Kuru Kingdom	77.9470	29.4337
Balkh	69.7581	35.2432
Kamboja	72.4904	34.0650
Gandhara	70.9445	33.0307
Kaikeya	73.1675	32.6057
Madradesh	73.3379	30.8228
Sindhu-Sauvira	68.3333	27.9166

Salva	75.5165	28.9753
Trigarta	76.5518	31.7431
Panchananda	71.6911	29.3544
Mahishmati	76.1510	22.2456
Avanti	75.6491	22.2723
Saurastra	70.7624	21.9409
Pragajyotishapur	91.9526	26.3472
Koshal	82.0365	27.5035
Kalinga	83.1590	19.5889
Andhras	79.8708	17.2407
Excavated sites in	**Kaurava**	**Kingdoms**
Kunal	76.4847	29.3856
Rakhigarhi	76.2499	29.5010
Hastinapur	78.4709	29.6741
Alamgirpur	77.6132	28.7746
Mandi	77.3206	29.4102
Bactria	69.1917	35.5054
Mundigak	71.8692	34.2783
Sarai khola	73.2200	33.3081
Charsadda	71.6792	33.2841
Jalilpur	73.7433	32.7841
Harappa	72.8929	30.6110
Mehrgarh	65.8845	28.8519
Nausharo	68.9284	28.7201
Kot Diji	68.8793	26.8400
Sothi	75.6611	28.8191
Siswal	75.2757	29.4179
Ujjain	75.8633	22.8077
Nagada	75.4227	23.4561
Padri	72.0662	21.6313
Lothal	72.2494	22.5229
Saurya Pahar	91.9448	26.5317

Ambari	91.6518	26.3000
Lahuradeva	82.9500	26.7667
Ayodhya	82.0285	26.6209
Shravasti	82.0365	27.5035
Sahet-Mahet	82.0474	27.5155
Gopalpur	84.8620	19.2647
Golbai-Sasan	84.9987	20.7901
Sisupalgarh	83.1524	20.9979
Mohenjodaro	67.9981	27.2342
Banawali	75.8115	29.4918
Ganweriwala (Explored)	71.1500	28.5989

Kingdoms which fought for Pandavas (in blue Colour)

Name	Longitude	Latitude
Indraprastha	76.9992	28.7557
Dwarka	69.1874	22.1395
Matsya Desh	75.5588	26.0177
Panchal	79.7739	27.9101
Vatsa Desh	81.8948	25.0291
Dasharna	78.0616	24.6324
Chedi Desh	77.3684	23.3091
Kashi	82.2383	24.7815
Kunti Puri	77.8649	26.2882
Dravida	79.6947	12.8185
Magadh	84.9554	25.0554
Excavated sites in	**Pandava**	**Kingdoms**
Purana Quila	77.2437	28.6096
Farmana	76.8130	28.9862
Girwad	76.3282	28.6527
Prabhas Patan	70.7296	21.0024
Dholavira	69.5486	23.1828
Junagarh	70.2691	21.4832
Virtanagar	76.1899	27.4311

Kannoj	79.9137	27.0514
Ahichhatra	79.3419	28.6282
Kampilya	78.7492	27.5123
Jhusi	81.8881	25.5580
Kaushambi	81.1962	25.9957
Bhimabetka Caves	77.6124	22.9395
Eran	77.9960	24.1551
Rajghat	82.4234	25.0993
Kutwar	77.7393	25.7065
Chirand	84.8249	25.7405
Sonepur	84.9757	24.7688
Taradih	84.7198	24.5138
Rajgir	85.4162	25.0173
Vaishali	85.2955	26.0050
Pandav Sthan	85.7976	25.6831
Naimisharanya	80.4818	27.3471
Other important places	**Mentioned in Mahabharat**	**(in black colour)**
Badrinath	79.5603	30.2937
Varnavat	77.3621	28.9814
Manipur	93.7059	24.6594
Vinashana	74.0819	29.4102
Kurukshetra	76.9782	30.0480
Other important	**Excavated sites**	
Sanauli	77.5023	29.1704
Thanesar	76.5695	29.7450
Karan Ka Tilla	76.6355	29.9262
Napachik	93.9511	24.7577
Nongpoh	93.6940	24.9160
Keithelmandi	93.9458	25.0996
Kalibangan	73.7273	29.0572
Navda Village (Explored)	70.4628	21.4322

Thus Mahabharat is not mythology, but it represents the real history of ancient Vedic India. Vedas were the compilation of the knowledge of that period whereas Ramayan and Mahabharat represent the history of that era. It has to be admitted that climate was the most significant factor in the rise and fall of Vedic Harappan civilization. This Indus-Sarasvati-Ganga Civilization had the world's first dockyard at Lothal (Bisht and Nigam), world's first Water Management System at Dholavira (Bisht,1991, 1997). It had first large signboard having inscription inlaid in wood at Dholavira (Rao, 1991 and Bisht, 1991), the first Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro and multiple wells (Wheeler 1945; Dales 1965). There were oldest bead-making factories at sites like Lothal (Rao, 1991), world's first double moats outside fortification wall at Banawali (Bisht, 1987) and world's earliest crops, like those of rice and barley from Lahuradeva (Tewari, 2007). It is this civilization which was flourishing during the Mahabharat era, and most of the excavated Harappan sites fall in the territories of kingdoms belonging to that era.

Development and decline of civilizations are attributable primarily to climatic changes. For example, at the beginning of the current Holocene period around 12000 BP, it was a period of Glacial Maximum indicating hyper-arid conditions, when not much cultural or agricultural activity could take place. During 8000 BP to 6000 BP was the period of mid-Holocene climatic optima when annual rainfall might have been double than modern times with good monsoonal rains during summers. The rivers like Indus, Sarasvati and Ganga and their tributaries were overflowing with water bringing prosperity to the inhabitants. This obviously led to rich flora and fauna and development in agricultural practices; leading to the development of civilization and culture. As a result, in the Indian subcontinent, the learned Sages composed Vedas as the storehouse of knowledge and composed Ramayan and Mahabharat to record the history of those times.

Consequently, Vedic Harappan civilization flourished for around 3000 years during 5000 BCE to 2000 BCE (7000 BP to 4000 BP). After that, again came the arid phase during 1900 BCE to 1200 BCE and people started settling in smaller settlements; that is why it is called regionalization era. By this time due to tectonic movements and earthquakes, Sarasvati had already become ephemeral; also because its tributary Sutlej had shifted towards the west and joined Indus through Beas whereas another tributary Yamuna shifted eastwards to join Ganga (Valdiya 2002, 2016; Sharma, 2012). Drishadvati lost its contact with its glacial sources. Consequently, people abandoned their existing habitats and moved to other places and, simultaneously, initiated the process of de-urbanization. One look at Holocene Sea Level Curve prepared by NIO, Goa, would make the entire sequence more than clear –

1. The sea-water level was steadily rising between 8000 BP and 5000 BP.
2. The water level started going down from around 4000 BP, i.e. 2000 BCE
3. During 3400 BP, i.e. 1400 BCE, the water level touched the lowest levels.
4. It is only after 1400 BCE that the seawater level started rising again and came up to the modern-day level by around 500 BCE.

It is therefore clear that changes in climatic conditions were the primary reasons behind the rise and fall of Vedic Harappan civilization. Due to the arid phase, there was a decline in levels of culture and civilization between 2000 BCE to 1200 BCE, when most of the pre-existing settlements were abandoned due to acute water shortage. During this period, due to climatic changes, the processes of migrations, de-urbanization and re-urbanization at other sites were taking place. It needs to be clarified that India had a vast land area, and the Climate all over the subcontinent has never been the same. If there were wet conditions on the northern side, there could be arid conditions in southern areas. Therefore it was practicable to migrate and resettle.

It is now clear that the Vedic Harappan civilization had its beginnings in eighth/seventh millennium BCE; evolved after that assimilating diverse influences, spread in the plains of Indus, Sarasvati and Ganga River systems and kept developing for many millennia. It has continued till date, making adjustments with changing times but with basics remaining ingrained in the geographic locations and in the minds of its inhabitants. In the middle of the 4th millennium BCE, the Harappans set about forces of urbanization, and slowly created a highly advanced urban civilization, while maintaining their advanced farming in villages, by the beginning of third millennium BCE to reign supreme during the next 6-8 centuries. It deserves to be emphasized that the Vedic Harappan elite did not suffer from the megalomania of kings of that period from Egypt and Mesopotamia. There were not many stupendous monumental stone or brick architectures or palaces. There did not appear to be a huge gap in the living styles of the rich and the poor. Most of the excavation reports and studies have proved that, at the beginning of third millennium BCE, Vedic Harappans of Mahabharat era had a reasonably developed civilization with a variety of terracotta items and utensils, beads and jewellery, art and craft, metal artefacts and weapons, houses and boats, wells and reservoirs *etc.* Most of these items find references in Mahabharat as well. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason for these Vedic Harappan sites not being considered as located in the kingdoms mentioned in Mahabharat and forming an integral part of their territories. Let us, therefore, call most of the Harappan sites as Vedic Harappan sites of kingdoms of the Mahabharat era.

(This chapter has been written for general readers, who are not having much knowledge of archaeology, and has been accordingly edited, amended, and improved by Dr R S Bisht (Padma Shri), an eminent archaeologist. The Map displaying excavated sites alongside the kingdoms of Mahabharat era has been prepared by the author in association with Shri Santu Maity, a senior Research Scholar from the Department of Geography in JNU)

CHAPTER 49

Dhritarashtra's grief, Gandhari's anguish, and Yudhishthir's remorse

After the war was over, grief-stricken Dhritarashtra collapsed and cried inconsolably over the death of his hundred sons and their supporters. He regretted that because of his blind love for his son Duryodhana; he abandoned the duties of a king in his favour. He repented that the destruction of all his sons, relatives, and kings could have been avoided if he had heeded the advice of Bhishma and Drona, Vidur and Vyas, Kripa and Shri Krishna. He then blamed destiny and evil deeds of his previous birth, due to which he had to suffer such unparalleled sorrow. Sanjay then reminded the king that there was no use of grieving as the calamity had befallen him because he did not prevent his wicked son Duryodhana in time. He was bent upon inflicting this war on Pandavas, under the devious advice of Dushasana, Karna, and Shakuni, and the king permitted him to do so.

Vidur tried to console the king saying that life is brief and death is inevitable. When the souls have left their bodies, no relationship survived. After their departure, Kuru King's sons had no connection with him. Any relationship ends with death, being only a physical connection; it is just a small incident in the soul's eternal journey birth after birth. Moreover, the king should not grieve for those who were killed on the battlefield because such slain Kshatriyas attain the highest heavens. He reiterated that death was inevitable, and it may come at different ages and stages in life. It is like the earthen pots moulded on a potter's wheel; some

break while being shaped, others when they are dried up, still others break while being removed from the kiln while many others break after being used. Moreover, grieving over the past events is neither wise nor right. Neither power nor riches, neither relatives nor friends can cure a man of his grief; this has to be done through control of self.

Dhritarashtra again swooned, grieving for his departed sons. Sage Vyas also reached at that point and tried to console Dhritarashtra with all the tenderness. He then said that the King was aware of everything. Anyone who is born must also die. He added that the terrible war came to reduce the earth's burden. That is why this calamity could not be prevented. Vyas added that kind-hearted and noble Yudhishthir was also grief-stricken and feeling miserable knowing that the Kuru king was overwhelmed with unbearable grief. The Kuru king should accept him and give his love to him. Knowing that what was inevitable had happened, he should treat Pandavas as his own children.

Neither Dhritarashtra nor Yudhishthir could endure the pain, grief, and wails of ladies of Bharata's households. At least 18 Akshauhini forces had been killed plus many more who joined later. Thus, more than 50 lakh soldiers had been killed. As a result, the females were lamenting and bewailing losing their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons in that dreadful war –

प्रगृह्य बाहून् त्क्रोशन्त्यः पुत्रान् भ्रातृन् पितृनपि ।
दर्शयन्तीव ता ह स्म युगान्ते लोक संक्षयम् ॥ स्त्री पर्व 11/10/12 ॥

Meaning: Moving towards the battlefield, those wailing women who had lost their sons, husbands, fathers and brothers, were stricken with unbearable grief.

Accompanied by Gandhari and many thousands of bereaved and bewailing women, Dhritarashtra left Hastinapur and went towards Kurukshetra. Going only two miles ahead, they met Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman. They then described how they had massacred all the sons of Draupadi and other Panchal and Pandava warriors when they were asleep. After that, they sought leave to depart since Pandavas would be following them for taking the revenge.

On learning that Dhritarashtra and Gandhari were coming to the deserted battlefield of Kurukshetra, Yudhishthir, accompanied by his brothers, made his way through the crowd of weeping women and bowed before them. Dhritarashtra embraced Yudhishthir, but that embrace was bereft of any love. Then Bhima was announced to the blind king. Dhritarashtra showed his keenness to meet Bhima. Shri Krishna understood that Dhritarashtra had revengeful and bad intentions against Bhima. So he gently pushed Bhima and placed an iron statue of Bhima,

which had been made by Duryodhana, before the blind king. Powerful king Dhritarashtra hugged the iron statue and held it in a tight embrace. It came to his mind that this man had slain all his hundred sons and his wrath became so intense that he crushed the iron image of Bhima to pieces by holding it in an extraordinary tight embrace. In the process, the king himself had got wounded.

Dhritarashtra then lamented that in his anger, he had killed Bhima. However, Lord Krishna responded by saying that Bhimasen had been saved whereas the tight embrace of Dhritarashtra had crushed his iron statue. Shri Krishna had prevented the disaster knowing in advance what the king's fury could do at that time. Shri Krishna advised Dhritarashtra to get over his anguish, grief and anger because Pandavas were totally innocent, the war was thrust on them by his own wicked son. The king also was to be blamed as he permitted himself to be ruled by his son and ignored the sound advice given to him by Bhishma, Drona, Vyas, Vidur, Gandhari and Shri Krishna himself. Dhritarashtra told Janardan that he had almost shed his anger and he wanted to embrace Yudhishthir who would now be looking after him.

After that, Lord Krishna and Pandava brothers went to Gandhari, who was sorely afflicted and angry. Sage Vyas, who was with her at that time, advised Gandhari not to be angry with Pandavas and not to curse them. He then reminded Gandhari that when the war began, she herself had said that where there were dharma and righteousness, there would be a victory. That is what had happened. Duryodhana had reaped the fruit of his own countless evil and sinful deeds. Those supporting his misdeeds were responsible for the extinction of the Kuru race. Gandhari then lamented that she could not get over the fact that Bhima killed Duryodhana by hitting the mace below his naval in the presence of Shri Krishna. Bhima conceded that this action might have been unfair, but he had to do so to redeem his pledge taken when Duryodhana had humiliated Draupadi in open Assembly by shamelessly displaying his thighs. Then, he with humility reminded Gandhari about many atrocities committed by Duryodhana, Dushasana, Karan and Shakuni on Pandavas and shameful humiliation piled on Draupadi in Kuru Assembly. Righteous Gandhari had never endorsed such actions, but Pandavas were naturally filled with revengeful feelings.

The pious Gandhari called out for Yudhishthir. He approached her with folded hands, fell prostrate on her feet, took all the blame, and beseeched her to shower all her curses on him. Gandhari heaved a deep sigh and stood still. She turned her head away knowing that if her vision fell on prostrate Yudhishthir through the cloth, with which her eyes were bound, he would be reduced to ashes. Even then, her vision fell on the toe of Yudhishthir, and at once, it was charred black. Arjun

knew the power of bereaved Gandhari's wrath, and he hid himself behind Janardan. The sagacious Gandhari blessed the Pandavas and sent them to Kunti. Then she turned to Draupadi, who was wailing and lamenting losing all her sons. Gandhari then held her in her grasp and consoled her, saying that they both could try to soothe each other as they both had lost all their children. She at that time took all the blame for the destructive war as she could not prevent her son in time from adopting wicked ways.

Gandhari then looked around in the battlefield with her spiritual eye. She described her hundred sons lying dead in the deserted battlefield while their womenfolk were weeping with grief. She also lamented the death of Karna, Abhimanyu and king Virat. She offered her tribute to Balhika, Jayadratha, Bhagdatta, and Shalya. She then paid homage to Drona and to Bhishma, who was lying on a bed of arrows waiting for Uttarayan. She lamented the deaths of Shakuni, Bhurishrava, Sudakshina, Jayatsena, Brihadbala and five Kekaya brothers. She also bewailed for Drupada, Dhrishtaketu, Vinda and Anuvinda. Gandhari then fell on the ground with unbearable grief. She then pronounced a curse on Shri Krishna for his connivance in the battle, saying that after 36 years he himself would die ignominiously, after the death of his own kith and kin, leaving the womenfolk crying. Shri Krishna just smiled.

The grief-stricken Dhritarashtra then told Yudhishthir that last rites of the bodies of lakhs of those departed souls had to be performed. The sagacious Yudhishthir then and there issued orders to Vidur, Dhaumya, Sanjay, Sudharman, Yuyutsu, and Indrasena to have the last rites performed of the bodies of departed souls following what is ordained in the scriptures. They immediately started collecting sandalwood, piles of other wood, linen cloth, ghee, oils and perfumes. They built pyres and then carefully burnt those kings and princes in order of seniority. The last rites for each one were performed one by one; the prayers were offered for the peace of the departed souls with hymns of Samveda. With offerings of ghee, fires blazed without smoke. The wails of women folk were heart-rending. For those men whose relatives were not around, Vidur performed the last rites.

Thereafter, they all went to the banks of holy Ganga. They all offered water to the departed souls. The womenfolk were offering water to their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. Pandavas led by Yudhishthir camped on the banks of Ganga for about one month. One day Kunti, afflicted with unbearable pain, suddenly appeared before Yudhishthir and revealed that mighty bowman Karan, who was killed by Arjun, was actually not Radha's son but their elder brother, born to her by the Sun. The Pandavas were grief-stricken, and Yudhishthir suffered unbearable anguish. He said that with this revelation, he felt more tormented than what he felt

at the death of Abhimanyu or sons of Draupadi. Lamenting and weeping, Yudhishthir then made an offering of water to his brother Karna. Kunti then tried to console him saying that Karna met his destiny and bore the fruit of his own actions as many efforts made by her to bring him round failed and he became even more committed to harm his Pandava brothers.

During that mourning period of one month, many sages and Brahmans visited Yudhishthir. One day Narad came and congratulated Yudhishthir for his victory. Yudhishthir was full of grief due to the death of so many relatives, kings and princes; in particular, he mourned the death of Karna. Yudhishthir wept saying that he was a sinner who had killed his own elder brother. Yudhishthir then recollected that he used to notice that Karna's feet resembled almost exactly those of his mother and then he again repented and wailed. Narad then informed Yudhishthir about various curses which were pronounced on Karna. Narad informed that once on finding that Arjun was superior to him in archery, he requested Drona to teach him on how to wield Brahmastra, but Drona refused, saying that only a Brahman or a Kshatriya could be taught that and not a Suta's son. Thereafter, Karan went to Parashuram and started learning archery by saying that he was a Brahman. One day Parashuram discovered that he was not a Brahman; he cursed him saying that when his hour comes, his knowledge of the astras will fail him. Again on another occasion while practising archery, Karan accidentally hit a Brahman's cow, and Brahman cursed him saying that during a battle his chariot wheels would get stuck in the mud and he would be done to death.

Narad then continued narrating some more facts about Karna. He said that Karan was very large-hearted in giving away things in charity. Once Indra came and took in charity Karan's earrings and armour; after that, his prowess was decreased. Karan gave an assurance to Kunti that he would not kill her four sons but would kill Arjun so that she still had five sons. Narad then tried to console Yudhishthir saying that he should not hold himself guilty of Karan's death. What had happened was destined to happen.

Yudhishthir's pain of mind increased with every passing day. As he thought about the deaths of his kin, he was stricken with intense remorse. He decided to give up the world and live the life of ascetics in the forest. At that point of time, Arjun gave a discourse on the decency of family life; he explained in detail all those noble deeds, which one was able to do as a householder, and that also as a king. Bhima admonished Yudhishthir saying that his proposal was violative of the dharma of a Kshatriya. He then wondered that Yudhishthir had studied Vedas and Shastras, yet he was talking like a dull-witted person because the dharma of a

Kshatriya was to lead an active life and not go to live in the forests as a *sanyasi*. Nakul also added that performing one's karma with sincerity and righteousness was the highest dharma. Sahadev argued that Yudhishthir was their father, brother and teacher and that he should not desert them at that stage.

Draupadi spoke in a most honest and most upright manner. She reminded that the duties of a king included the duty of inflicting fair punishment to the guilty. Duryodhana and his men had committed many heinous crimes for which they were rightly punished. As a Kshatriya, it was the sacred duty of Yudhishthir to take upon himself the duties of an emperor and then govern according to the principles of dharma. She asked Yudhishthir to stop grieving himself and extend support to others in that time of their need. She also reminded him about his promise of giving his brothers and Draupadi a better life, once the period of exile was over. He should remember that they had all sacrificed so much for his sake. He should follow the dharma of kings, and after conducting Ashwamedha yajnas, he should give wealth in charity to the Brahmanas.

Sage Vyas also gave a sermon to Yudhishthir about his duty at that time, pointing out various precedents and quoting from scriptures. Vyas then said that it was the duty of a Kshatriya king to punish those who rebel against their righteous rule; this is what Yudhishthir had done during that war. Sage Vyas also told Yudhishthir that he should stop blaming himself for the deaths of Bhishma, Drona and Karna etc. as what was destined had happened. Vyas then cited the example of King Janak of Ramayan era, who after renouncing the duties of a monarch, went to the forest. On the advice of Sage Ashman, he came back, stopped grieving, and started performing the duties of a king. Vyas thereafter advised Yudhishthir to go to Hastinapur and take up the burden of ruling the vast Kuru kingdom. Yudhishthir then obtained a list of sinful and righteous actions from Sage Vyas. Sage Vyas, however, advised Yudhishthir to go and learn some more pearls of wisdom from Bhishma. Yudhishthir said that he was unable to face Bhishma after committing so many sins and even felling him through deceit in the battle. Vyas and Shri Krishna advised him to get crowned as the king in Hastinapur and then go to Bhishma Pitamah for his advice.

After that followed by Lord Krishna, his own brothers and citizens, Yudhishthir entered the city of Hastinapur. Many Brahmans also followed him. Yudhishthir entered the palace, worshipped the gods; Brahmans pronounced the blessings. He sat on the golden throne; his supporters sat on other thrones. The Pandava's household priest Dhaumya came for the coronation ceremony. He installed Yudhishthir and Draupadi on a throne covered with tiger skin, poured consecrated water on them; Dhritarashtra also did the same. Thus, Yudhishthir became the

emperor of the entire Kuru kingdom. Yudhishthir presented costly gifts to Brahmans. He bowed before Dhritarashtra and promised that his commands would be obeyed. Thereafter, he performed *shradha* ceremony for all his slain kin and gave away substantial wealth in charity. Yudhishthir thereafter granted protection to the widows; provided clothing and shelter to the needy. With the permission of Dhritarashtra, Yudhishthir allotted residences to his kith and kin and to the courtiers. Duryodhana's palace was allocated to Bhima; Arjun started living in the mansion of Dushasana. Nakula was asked to live in the bastion of Durmarshan, and Sahadev was allotted the palace of Durmukha.

CHAPTER 50

Bhishma expounded his knowledge to Yudhishthir on the duties of kings and other human beings (Shanti Parva)

Yudhishthir thereafter told Vyas that he wanted to know all about the dharma of kings. Vyas suggested that he should go to Bhishma to obtain that knowledge. Yudhishthir was hesitant and felt guilty that he used deceit in bringing about Bhishma's fall. However, both Lord Krishna and Sage Vyas urged him to go and learn wisdom from Bhishma for the good of humanity. Yudhishthir went to Bhishma accompanied by Arjun, Bhima, Nakul, Sahadev, Shri Krishna, Satyaki, Yuyutsu, and Sanjay. Shri Krishna approached Bhishma, appreciated his vast knowledge, and requested him to dispel Yudhishthir's grief. Bhishma agreed; for many days, the Pandavas kept visiting Bhishma every day returning to Hastinapur very frequently after hearing the words of wisdom and knowledge imparted by Bhishma (Shanti Parva).

Yudhishthir asked Bhishma about the dharma of kings, of four classes in society and of four ashrams, i.e. stages of life. Yudhishthir asked several questions about the duties of kings; what they should do and what was avoidable. He asked him how a king could attain the highest heavens. Bhishma replied all these questions in detail by giving examples from ancient scriptures. This knowledge imparted by Bhishma is recorded in Shanti Parva and is contained in chapters 56 to 365 of Shanti Parva. A very brief glimpse of such knowledge imparted by Bhishma is given in the succeeding paragraphs.

Bhishma said that four varnas were the four functional divisions of society: Brahman was the lord of all beings, was responsible for the protection of dharma; Kshatriyas were the warrior class and had the responsibility of protecting the earth and its people; Vaishyas were to sustain the society with agriculture, cattle rearing, industry and trade; and the Shudras were to run the service sector to serve everyone in society. Bhishma added that the latent fears of the subjects had to be allayed by the Brahmans, whereas the observable fears had to removed by the Kshatriyas ruling as kings. Bhishma listed nine general virtues that applied to all four classes but then described the specific dharma of each of the four classes. He elaborated that Brahmans should be self-controlled and they must study the Vedas; Kshatriyas should give gifts, bestow charity, perform yajnas, protect people and show courage in battle. Circumstances may arise when a Brahman may have to perform the duties of a Kshatriya and vice versa.

Bhishma Pitamah after that explained the four stages of life, which move in a sequence - from the unmarried student (*Brahmachari*) to the householder (*Grihasth*); from the forest dweller (*vanaprastha*) to the hermit (*sannyasin)*. Bhishma explained that these four stages were basically prescribed for Brahmans, but others also could follow these. He explained that these four stages do not apply to the kings as their duties and their dharma were different. He explained that the sincere performance of kingly duties brings the merit of discharging duties prescribed for four stages of life. A celibate student must be disciplined, attentive, and obedient. The householder must discharge his duties with loyalty and truthfulness; he should give charity to the Brahmans.

After that, Bhishma explained in detail the duties of kings. A king must first conquer himself and then his enemies. A king must protect his subjects under all circumstances and should make use of liberality and mercy while dealing with them. A king must also act agreeably towards his kin, while simultaneously mistrusting them. A king's highest dharma is to administer justice and punishment. In response to a specific query from Yudhishthir, Bhishma said that in order to administer justice, a king could appoint a panel consisting of four Brahmans, three Shudras and one Suta. All cases must be heard in public; all care must be taken to ensure that justice was done to all, particularly to the poor and the weak. The punishment system must include capital punishment for heinous crimes.

Bhishma thereafter explained that a king must live in a secure, well provided, and well-administered city. For proper administration he should maintain a hierarchy of officers, extending from one man for one village to an administrator in charge of a thousand villages. He should collect his revenue by adopting a gentle approach. The king should take special care of the weak, should fear their enormous

power as that could destroy him if he did not take care of them. Bhishma also explained the ethics relating to soldiers, weapons, and wars. The soldiers must be trained adequately, and a system of increments and promotions must be in place. Even against an enemy, one should not make use of barbed and poison-smeared weapons. Before resorting to war, all means of the peaceful settlement must be exhausted. In order to bring happiness to his kingdom, a king must ensure that people are appointed to different positions on merit; only men of best character should be the kings' associates and holders of dominant positions. A virtuous disposition had to be maintained to bring prosperity to the kingdom. Whether time may be good or bad, a king must maintain his treasury, his rod, his army, and his allies. A king must offer refuge to those who seek that.

Bhishma explained that all evils originate in greed and a combination of greed and ignorance could prove disastrous for the king. That is why a king must always exercise self-control. Bhishma explained that truth was the highest virtue, and it may take several forms, including truth itself, equanimity, selflessness, forbearance, nobility, and renunciation. Yudhishthir then asked about the origin of the universe and origin of creatures. Bhishma replied that everything originated first from primal known as Manasa (mental power). Manasa created lotus, from which was born Brahma. Brahma first created water and then created the five elements. All these five elements are present in all living beings. It is the eternal god Vishnu that transcends all other things and is called Supreme Brahman. Bhishma then described the great qualities of Lord Krishna and that he was beyond understanding.

Grief-stricken Yudhishthir thereafter submitted before Bhishma that even after all his teachings; he did not enjoy any peace as he was full of guilt for slaughtering his kith and kin, kings and warriors. Bhishma told him that he was wrong in presuming that he was the cause of slaughter as it was under the control of forces outside him. He also talked about the previous birth, and karmic account brought therefrom. Yudhishthir wanted to know between destiny and human exertion, which was superior. Bhishma clarified that virtuous actions could protect even against destiny and that without human exertion, destiny bears no fruit. He further elaborated that no good deed ever perished. One is bound to receive the reward of one's all good and bad deeds; if not in this birth then in subsequent births.

Yudhishthir then announced that he was consumed with grief for slaying the Brahmans and the kings; he intended to pursue a life of fierce asceticism. Bhishma replied that by performing sacrifices, giving away charity, one could earn greater rewards. He also added that when a man falls in battle, he attains the highest heavens. Bhishma clarified that freedom from fear to all creatures, kindness to those in distress, and fulfilling wants of the needy were the greatest gifts, a human

being could give to others. Such gifts can free a man from sin. Bhishma particularly appreciated donation of food and drinks, of land and cattle. Bhishma after that said that a king must dig ponds to provide water to his subjects and plant trees for the benefit of living beings.

Yudhishthir enquired who go to heaven and who goes to hell. Bhishma responded that those who follow dharma go to heaven and those who pursue adharma go to hell. If a person has sinned but wants to follow dharma after that, then confessing the wrong-doing followed by virtuous actions was the best way to return to dharma. After that, Bhishma fell silent. Vyas advised Yudhishthir to go to Hastinapur and rule as per the advice given by Bhishma.

CHAPTER 51

Bhishma ascended Heaven when the Sun began its northward movement

Yudhishthir with his relatives, followers, and priests left for Hastinapur. Around the 58th day of Bhishma's fall in battle, on seeing that the northward movement of the Sun had just begun, Yudhishthir came back with a huge retinue to the place where Bhishma was lying on his bed of arrows, carrying with him the material for Bhima's cremation. He saw that sages - Vyas, Narad, Asit, and Devala were looking after Bhishma's. Accompanied by his four Pandava brothers, Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Lord Krishna, Yudhishthir saluted Bhishma. The son of Ganga opened his eyes, held Yudhishthir's hand in his own hands and said that he had arrived at the right time when Sun's movement towards the North had just begun –

दिष्ट्या प्राप्तोऽसि कौन्तेय सहामात्यो युधिष्ठिर ।
परिवृत्तो हि भगवान् सहस्त्रांशुर्दिवाकरः।। अनुशासन पर्व, 13/167/26 ।।
अष्टपञ्चाशतं राज्यः शयानस्याद्य मे गताः।
शरेषु निशिताग्रेषु यथा वर्षशतं तथा ।। अनुशासन पर्व, 13/167/27 ।।
माघोऽयं समनुप्राप्तो मासः सौम्यो युधिष्ठिर ।
त्रिभागशेषः पक्षोऽयं शुक्लो भवितुमर्हति ।। अनुशासन पर्व, 13/167/28 ।।

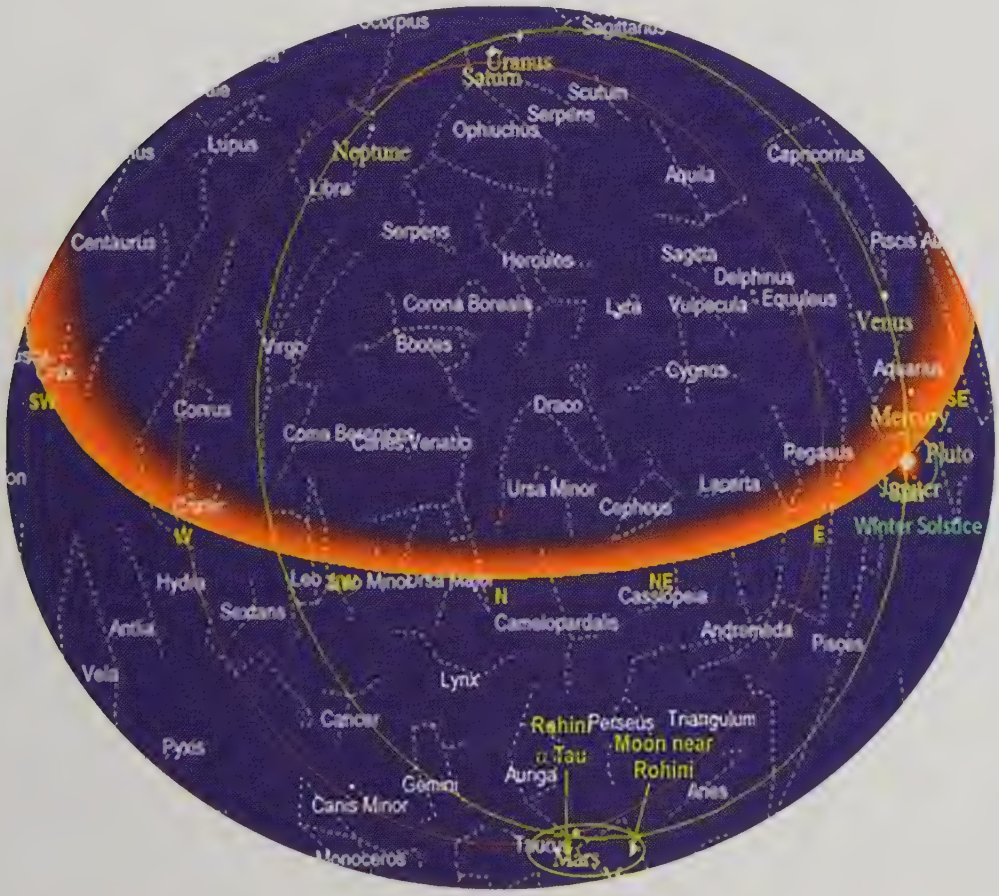
Meaning: Bhishma said, "Luckily, O son of Kunti, you have come here with all your counsellors at an appropriate time. The thousand rayed maker of the day, the holy Sun, has begun its northward movement (167/26). I have been lying here for fifty-eight nights. Stretched on these sharp arrows, I have felt as if this period was

equal to a hundred years (167/27). O noble Yudhishthir, the lunar month of *Maagh* has begun, and it is *Shukla paksha, i.e.* the waxing phase of Moon. Three-fourth of this month is still left, i.e. one-fourth part of Maagh month is over as per my calculations" (167/28).

Lying on his bed of arrows, Bhishma Pitamah was waiting for the Sun to begin its Northward journey (Uttarayan). That day arrived on 14th January, 3138 BCE, when it was Saptami of the lighted fortnight in the month of Maagh and Moon was in Rohini Nakshatra (in Taurus Constellation), as per the references in Anushasana Parva and Shanti Parva of Mahabharat. See the Sky shot, taken using Stellarium, from Hastinapur (29° N, 77° E) of 14th January, 3138 BCE at 7.20 AM, when Sun had just started its northward journey; Moon was near Rohini, and it was *Maagh Shukla Saptami*. This is also a unique date, and this sky-view does not get repeated in/ around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE, which are the dates for Mahabharat war determined by other scientists and scholars.

Hastinapur, 29°N 77°E: 14th January, 3138 BCE at 7.20 AM; Sun had just started its northwards journey, Moon was near Rohini, and it was Magh Shukla Saptami - Stellarium 0.19.0

Since this sky view is a significant marker for determining the date of Mahabharat war, a sky shot was taken using Planetarium software as well. It displayed the same sky view with the occurrence of the winter solstice 26 days earlier on 19 December 3139 BCE, being *Maagh Shukla Saptami* when the Moon was in *Rohini* (Taurus), and Saturn was afflicting Rohini at that time. Twenty-one days earlier on 29th November, Full Moon was in Magha Nakshatra (Leo Constellation). The day after, on *Maagh Shukla Ashtami*, was Bhishma's demise when he united himself with eternity. *This calendrical difference of 26 days in the dates displayed by two softwares for the same sky view is explained in Box – 8.* The Planetarium Gold (version 4.1) sky shot is given below -



Hastinapur (29°N, 78°E), 19th Dec. 3139 BCE at 7.20 AM, Winter solstice - Sun started its Northwards journey; Moon was near Rohini, afflicted by Saturn, and it was Magh Shukla Saptami

Box – 8 : Why the dates of same sky views generated, using Planetarium and Stellarium softwares, are different?

A comparison was made between the softwares - Planetarium Gold and Stellarium, which have been used to generate the skyviews of astronomical observations recorded in Mahabharat. The objective was to know the reasons for difference of about 26 days in displaying the sky views of same astronomical observations recorded by Sage Vyas. Most simple explanation is that the Julian calendar had a regular year of 365.25 days, divided into 12 months and a leap day was added to February every four years. However, actually one year consists of 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds and not exact 365.25 days. This difference of 11 minutes and 14 seconds per year becomes a difference of one day in 131 years.

Pope Gregory XIII of Catholic Church, Rome, introduced the Gregorian reforms in 1582 CE. Consequently, in Italy, 11 days were omitted by taking October 4, 1582, as October 15, 1582. In France also, where Stellarium Software was developed, 11 days were omitted by taking December 9, 1582 as December 20, 1582.

(Reference: The Gregorian Conversion' by Professor Robert A Hatch -http://users.clas.ufl.edu/ufhatch/pages/03-Sci-Rev/SCI-REV-Home/Historical-Research/Calendars/gregorian_calendar_history.html)

Further, as per old Julian Calendar, every year that was exactly divisible by 4 used to be a Leap Year with February having 29 days and year consisting of 366 days. However, after the Gregorian Reform, every year divisible by four is a leap year, except for the years that are exactly divisible by 100, but these centurial years are leap years if they are exactly divisible by 400. For example, the years 1700, 1800, and 1900 are not leap years, but the year 2000 is a leap year.

Thus, the Gregorian reforms took into account the difference of 11 days i.e of 1 day in 131 years during 1441 years prior to 1582 CE. However prior to 0141 CE (1582 – 1441 = 141 years), this difference of 1 day for every 131 years was not taken into account. Planetarium has adopted this Gregorian Reform over Julian Calendar as its ephemeris. Whereas, Stellarium has taken into account this difference of one day for every 131 years for last 13200 years. Stellarium (version 0.15.2 & 0.19.0) has followed NASA JPL DE 431 Ephemeris and is apparently more precise than Planetarium, but is less viewer-friendly.

Counting from 3139 BCE to 0141 CE, there is a gap of 3280 years, resulting in difference of approximately 26 days. That is why Stellarium displays the same sky after a gap of 26 (+/- 1 day) days. That is the reason why Planetarium software shows the sky simulation of occurrence of winter solstice on Maagh shukla saptami on 19th December, 3139 BCE, whereas Stellarium displays the same sky view on 14th January, 3138 BCE.

I started working on Planetarium Gold software of Fogware Publishing because it is easy to operate and generate colored printed slides of sky views wherein date and time, latitude and longitude, phases of Moon and eclipses etc. are clearly displayed. This software also provides the option of displaying the traditional names, along with scientific names of stars and thus makes identification of Nakshatras (Lunar Mansions), referred to in Mahabharat and other ancient Indian texts, very easy. However, I had to move to Stellarium because Planetarium has since been discontinued and hence not available to the readers for verification of assertions made in this book.

Stellarium has been used for its greater precision and for setting at rest all kinds of controversies about the astronomical dates of planetary references in Mahabharat. Stellarium is an open-source free planetarium software, licensed under the terms of the GNU (General Public License version 2), available for Linux, Windows and Mac operating systems. The French programmer Fabien Chéreau, who launched the project in the summer of 2001, created it. Currently, Stellarium is being maintained and developed by Alexander Wolf, George Zotti, Marcos Cardinot, Guillaume Chéreau, Bogdan Marinov, Timothy Reaves, Ferdinand Majerech and Jörg Müller.

We can use any planetarium software; the sky simulations would exactly match the sequential description of astronomical configurations described by Sage Valmiki in Ramayan right from 5116 BCE onwards and by Sage Vyas in Mahabharat from 3153 BCE onwards. The skyviews are the same but difference in displaying dates is attributable only to the difference in ephemeris followed by these two softwares.

Thus, King Yudhishthir had arrived on Maagh Shukla Saptami. He bowed before Bhishma Pitamah who enlightened him about the basic principles of life, including the duties of four varnas, dharma to be followed during four ashrams and the duties of a king. After that, Bhishma turned towards Dhritarashtra and asked him not to grieve as all his sons were wicked-souled, who were full of jealousy, anger, and greed. He then advised him to treat Yudhishthir and his brothers as his sons. They were all noble-souled and were devoted to their elders and preceptors. He assured him that they would always obey him and would look after him with care and concern.

Bhishma, then, turned to Krishna Vasudeva and addressed him as the Eternal Soul, creator of the universe. He then gracefully acknowledged that he had been the sole refuge of the sons of Pandu and that he should continue to protect them. Bhishma thereafter said that sages Narad and Vyas had told him that old rishis Narayan and Nar were born amongst men as Shri Krishna and Arjun. Thereafter he sought permission of Krishna Vasudeva to renounce his body to attain the highest heaven. Shri Krishna then granted him leave to depart from this world; after that, Bhishma took leave from Dhritarashtra, Pandavas, and Brahmanas to renounce his body.

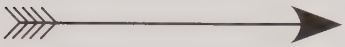
Bhishma Pitamah thereafter brought his vital breath under yogic control. His life-breath appeared from the top of his head and proceeded towards heaven. Thus, Bhishma united himself with eternity. Then Yudhishthir and Vidur wrapped Bhishma's body in a silken cloth and floral garlands. All the family members, including wives of Kuru lords, Shri Krishna, Sages, and Brahmans, stood around Bhishma's body when it was placed on the pyre on the banks of Bhagirathi. They all offered oblations and poured libations on the sacred fire. It appeared that

Goddess Ganga was lamenting Bhishma's death, but Shri Krishna reminded her that he was devoted to his father like sage Markandeya and that he would attain the highest heaven. The last rites of Bhishma were thus completed with full honour.

Yudhishthir collapsed on the banks of Bhagirathi due to intense grief, but Dhritarashtra advised him not to grieve as he was not the cause of the catastrophe which had overtaken the Kuru race but it was the result of Dhritarashtra's own foolishness. Janardan advised Dharmaputra to give up grief and perform the duties of a king following his Kshatriya dharma. Yudhishthir, however, replied that after killing Bhishma and Karna, he was unable to remain at peace with himself and wanted to retire to the forests for penance. Shri Krishna and sage Vyas advised Yudhishthir that a Kshatriya could remove sins incurred from evil deeds by performing Ashwamedha yajnas and by giving wealth in charity. Yudhishthir accepted in principle that earth could be purified through horse sacrifice, but his treasury was empty as almost entire wealth had been spent on war.

After performing all the funeral rites, and after having distributed riches and wealth in charity, Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti, Vidur, Yudhishthir and all other Pandavas, courtiers and Brahmans entered the city of Hastinapur. Virtuous Yudhishthir continued to govern the Kuru kingdom. Shri Krishna and Dhananjaya, however, went to the beautiful Assembly Hall of Indraprastha and spent some happy days together. Shri Krishna then expressed his desire to leave for Dwarka assuring Arjun of his support in future. He then wanted Arjun to go and tell Yudhishthir that after the death of Duryodhana, along with his armies, relatives and associates, the entire Kuru kingdom, filled with wealth and gems, had passed on to Yudhishthir and he should rule over the whole earth with virtue and nobility.

CHAPTER 52



Krishna informed Vasudeva about Abhimanyu's death & performed his last rites in Dwarka

Shri Krishna and Arjun mounted Janardan's chariot and went to Hastinapur. On the way, Arjun showered praises on Krishna for his qualities as a supreme lord of the world. On reaching Hastinapur, they paid their respects to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti, Yudhishthir, and Bhima. Next day they approached the emperor Yudhishthir; Arjun sought his formal permission so that Shri Krishna could go to Dwarka to meet his ailing father. The permission was quickly granted, but Yudhishthir beseeched Shri Krishna to return for the horse-sacrifice which was being planned. Lord Krishna then departed for Dwarka, taking his sister Subhadra with him, accompanied by Satyaki. After travelling a long distance, they finally reached Dwarka and entered their respective dwellings.

Shri Krishna went to his parents and paid his respects. His father, Vasudeva, asked several questions about the destructive battle; Shri Krishna answered all these questions with accuracy. He told his father how, on the 10th day Bhishma fell with the arrows of Arjun shot from behind Shikhandin. Thereafter, on the 15th day of the war, Dhrishtadhyumna killed Drona, whereas, on the 17th day, Arjun had killed Karna. The battle almost came to an end when Yudhishthir killed Shalya on the 18th day. Krishna then told that Duryodhana, however, had fled and hid in the lake but later on he died in single combat with Bhima. Shri Krishna informed that

a little later Ashwatthama massacred surviving members of Pandavas and Panchals in their sleep.

To avoid causing unbearable sorrow to a grandfather, Krishna did not tell about the death of his grandson Abhimanyu to Vasudeva. Subhadra nevertheless persuaded Shri Krishna to narrate all the facts. On hearing about the death of brave and young Abhimanyu, both Vasudeva and Subhadra fell to the ground bewailing in grief. Shri Krishna tried to pacify them, saying that Abhimanyu had fought with such exceptional bravery that he would have attained the highest heavens. He then also explained that how Kunti and Draupadi had tried to console pregnant widow Uttara. Shri Krishna then begged with Vasudeva to put an end to his grief. After that Shri Krishna performed funeral rites for Abhimanyu. Vasudeva and other Vrishnis performed the *Shradh* ceremony.

In Hastinapur, all the Pandavas were grieving. They were worried because grief-stricken, but pregnant Uttara was not eating anything, and everyone was worried lest she lost her baby. However, sage Vyas arrived in time to assure them that Uttara would give birth to a heroic son who would rule the earth for many years. Sage Vyas also advised Yudhishthir to perform the horse-sacrifice at the earliest. Vyas also reminded Yudhishthir about the treasure of Marutta, which could be obtained to perform the sacrifice. Yudhishthir requested Bhima and his other brothers to obtain that wealth. After that, the four Pandava brothers travelled towards the Himalayas and set up a camp at a selected spot. Led by sage Vyas, they travelled to the place where the treasure was hidden. Extensive and intensive digging was carried out, and vast wealth was recovered. After offering their grateful prayers to Lord Shiva, they left with this vast wealth for Hastinapur.

Meanwhile, Shri Krishna and other eminent Vrishnis had travelled to Hastinapur for participating in the horse-sacrifice. Dhritarashtra and Vidur welcomed them and hosted them. Uttara gave birth to Parikshit, but due to Ashwatthama's Brahmashira weapon, the child appeared to be still-born. Everyone around was grief-stricken. Kunti beseeched Lord Krishna to honour his promise and revive Parikshit. Deeply anguished Subhadra bewailed unable to reconcile to the fact that her brave son's child was born dead. She begged with Krishna to somehow revive Uttara's son and save Kuru and Pandu race from extinction. Shri Krishna agreed to make his effort. He went to the lying-in-chamber where sobbing Uttara poured her grief out and begged with him to save the child. Abhimanyu's wife Uttara was so overwhelmed with despair and grief that she fell weeping on the ground. In her anguish and her longing for her son, she wailed, saying that she also wanted to die by consuming poison. Kunti, Draupadi, and Subhadra were all experiencing excruciating and unbearable pain. Sunk in deep sorrow, they were all begging with Lord Krishna to keep his promise by reviving the child.

Then touching the earth with her head to salute lotus-eyed Krishna, Uttara bewailed before him and begged with him to revive the child. Hearing her heart-rending lamentations, Krishna promised to revive the child. He touched the water and thereafter withdrew the force of Brahmashira weapon. Then Krishna said that as truth and virtue were always established in him, let the son of Uttara revive. The child showed a little movement. The Brahmashira weapon was then fully withdrawn. The child after that began moving his limbs, and after a short while, he was revived. The Brahmans started singing benedictions and women sang praises of Lord Krishna. Then with a pleased heart, Uttara lifted the child in her arms and reverentially saluted Lord Krishna. At that time, Lord Krishna said that since the child was born at a time when his family had almost become extinct, let his name be Parikshit. Krishna and his other relatives bestowed very many valuable gifts on the child.

When Parikshit was about one month old, Pandavas came back to the city of Hastinapur with their vast wealth, including a huge pile of gold and precious gems. Yudhishthir and his ministers extended an exceptionally warm welcome to them. On hearing about their triumphant return, Shri Krishna and other Vrishni bigwigs went out to receive them. They all entered Hastinapur together. Then they all went to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti, touched their feet and made a symbolic offering of entire wealth. After that, they heard the great news of the revival of an almost still-born child, named as Parikshit by Lord Krishna. They all adored and worshipped Krishna.

CHAPTER 53

Yudhishthir performed Ashwamedha yajna and gave away much wealth in charity

A few days later, sage Vyas came to Hastinapur. King Yudhishthir informed him that huge wealth was brought from the Himalayan region by his brothers and that he wanted to spend a major part of it on horse-sacrifice and on giving charity to Brahmans. Sage Vyas replied that this should be done at once and without further delay. Having obtained the permission of sage Vyas, Yudhishthir addressed Janardan saying, "O you of undecaying glory, O delighter of the Kurus and Vrishnis, the various comforts we enjoy, have all been acquired through your power. The whole earth has been subjugated through your prowess and intelligence. You are our highest preceptor and master. If you perform this sacrifice, I shall be purified of every sin". Vasudeva Krishna eulogized Yudhishthir saying, "You are our king, and also our senior. With my approval freely granted, worship the celestials in the horse-sacrifice. Appoint me to perform whatever task and I shall accomplish all. Bhimasen, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahadev will also be sacrificing when you perform the horse-sacrifice."

Yudhishthir then enquired from sage Vyas about the auspicious date of his initiation for the yajna. Sage Vyas replied that the rite of initiation should be performed on the full moon day of Chaitra month.

चेत्र्यां हि पौर्णमास्यां तु तव दीक्षा भविष्यति I
सम्भाराः सम्भ्रियन्तां च यज्ञार्थं पुरुषर्षभ II 14/72/4

Meaning: Sage Vyas replied to Yudhishthir, "The rite of initiating you will be performed on the day of the full moon in the month of Chaitra. Let all the arrangements for the sacrifice be got made. The full moon day of Chaitra Month in 3138 BCE happened to be on 22nd February, 3138 BCE; See the relevant sky view –

Hastinapur, 22nd Feb. 3138 BCE; Full Moon in Chitra Nakshatra, i.e. Virgo Constellation

On receipt of orders from King Yudhishthir, all the materials needed for horse sacrifice were gathered. Dharmaputra then informed Vyas that all arrangements had been made. Sage Vyas replied that time and conditions were right for Yudhishthir's initiation for the Yajna. Therefore, a horse should be let loose under the protection of Arjun, who has celestial weapons and a heavenly strength of body and mind. During this period; Bhima and Nakul were to protect Yudhishthir's kingdom, whereas Sahadev was to deal with all household concerns.

All orders given by sage Vyas were wholly and accurately carried out. Kind-hearted Yudhishthir was grief-stricken for the slaughter of kings and soldiers during the Mahabharat war. He did not want any more wars, killings, or deaths. Therefore, he called Arjun and told him to be the protector of the horse because he was competent as well as brave. However, at that time, the king advised Arjun to avoid fighting a battle against any king even if he opposed him. He should inform the kings about this Ashwamedhika yajna for the good of humanity and invite them to attend the same respectfully informing that king of Hastinapur was desirous of maintaining amicable relations with them. Thereafter, with the permission of Dhritarashtra, Yudhishthir appointed Bhima and Nakul to protect the city. He directed Sahadev to welcome and look after all the guests.

When the hour for initiation came, all those great *ritvijas* duly initiated the king for the horse-sacrifice. Vyas of boundless wisdom himself released the sacrificial horse. Wearing a cloth of red silk and black deerskin for his upper garment, adorned with a garland of gold, Yudhishthir was looking like Prajapati sitting on the sacrificial altar. Brave and unparalleled Dhananjaya, with Gandiva in his hand, sat in his chariot yoked to white horses and followed the sacrificial black horse. The Brahmans, the citizens, and the spectators were then pronouncing benedictions so that Arjun came back glorious after a successful mission. The horse thereafter roamed all over the earth at it's will. Many of the kings who had lost their kith and kin during the Kurukshetra war came out to fight disregarding the message of peace given by Arjun. Many barbarians as well as many noble kings, desirous of battle, also fought against Arjun. Therefore Yudhishthir's message seemed to have no impact and battle after the battle took place, and thousands of kings, princes, and warriors were vanquished or slain by Arjun.

First of all sons and grandsons of Trigarta kings captured the sacrificial horse and disregarding the conciliatory words of Arjun they attacked Arjun desirous of avenging defeat during Kurukshetra war. A fierce battle followed. Arjun killed their king Suryavarman and his brother Ketuvarman. Finally, when Dhritavarman was also vanquished, Trigartas surrendered and accepted the authority of Pandavas. Thereafter, the horse moved to Pragajyotishapur, where, ignoring the message of peace from Arjun, Vajradatta, son of slain Bhagadatta, attacked Arjun. The war went on for four days; Arjun killed Vajradatta's warriors as well as his mighty elephant but spared Vajradatta informing him about Yudhishthir's desire and invited him to the Ashwamedha yajna. Vajradatta accepted defeat and agreed to attend the great sacrifice at Hastinapur.

The sacrificial black coloured horse after that went to Manipur. Babhruvahan, king of Manipur was Arjun's son. The two men fought; pleased with his son's

valour Arjun did not hit very hard. When Babhruvahan saw Arjun weakening, he shot a sharp arrow in his chest; Arjun fell unconscious on earth. Arjun's wife Chitrangada, who was the mother of Babhruvahan, started weeping and wanted her husband revived at any cost. With the help from Ulupi, Babhruvahan brought and placed Revivifying jewel on Arjun's chest; he got revived and stood up immediately. The horse after that reached Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. Meghasamdhi, a grandson of Jarasandh, came out to fight with full force. Arjun did not want to kill him but only killed his charioteer, his horses, and broke his bow. After that, he invited Meghasamdhi to attend the horse-sacrifice. Then the horse went along the coast from Bengal to Kerala, from there it came to Dwarka. On the way, Arjun defeated the Chedi king, who was the son of Shishupal. Arjun after that befriended Ugrasen, the ruler of Dwarka.

The horse thereafter went to the west of Indian sub-continent and reached Sindhu-Sauvira. In spite of peace-making message pronounced by Arjun, thousands of Sindhu warriors attacked Arjun and wounded him severely. Arjun then twanged his Gandiva and with his sharp arrows severed the heads of many soldiers. Duryodhana's sister Dushala came with her grandson and explained to Arjun that on hearing about his arrival with the sacrificial horse, her son Suratha died of grief and worry. She compared her own grandson with Abhimanyu's son and begged for mercy. Arjun stopped the fight immediately and embraced Dushala, who went back to her palace reassured.

After that, the horse went to Gandhara where Arjun had to fight a fierce battle against the son of Shakuni as he rejected all peace offers and conciliatory words uttered by Arjun. Arjun killed many warriors, and many ran away from the battlefield. Finally, with a crescent-shaped arrow, Arjun carried off the crown of Shakuni's son much in the same manner as he had done with jayadratha's head. Everybody understood that Arjun did not want to kill the young king. Hearing this, his mother and Shakuni's wife came with a grand offering for Arjun, putting an end to the war. Arjun rebuked Shakuni's son and instructed him to attend the horse-sacrifice at Hastinapur.

Finally, the horse turned in the direction of Hastinapur. Yudhishthir was informed that the sacrificial horse, duly protected by Arjun, was on its way back. Yudhishthir's heart was filled with joy, and he felt extremely proud of his victorious brother Arjun and his deeds. Dharmaraja also appreciated Arjun's conduct in Sindhu-Sauvira and Gandhar. Yudhishthir realized that 12th day of a lighted fortnight in the month of Maagh had arrived and Pushya Nakshatra was favourable. Thus the horse had taken almost 10 full months to take a round of earth under the protection of Arjun. He also had to fight many battles.

एतस्मिन्नेव काले तु द्वादशीं माघमासिकीम् I
इष्टं गृहीत्वा नक्षत्रं धर्म राजो युधिष्ठिर: II 14/85/4
उपस्थितश्च कालोऽयमभीतो वर्तते हय: I
माघी च पौर्णमासीयं मास: शेषो वृकोदर II 14/85/8

Meaning: On realizing that the twelfth day of Shukla paksha (waxing phase) of Maagh month had arrived and noticing that Nakshatra was favourable (Pushya in Cancer Constellation), Dharmaputra Yudhishthir *called his brothers.* Yudhishthir then talked to Vrikodara, saying that auspicious time had come; the sacrificial horse *duly protected by heroic Arjun* had arrived in the vicinity of Hastinapur *after about ten months, i.e. from Chaitra to Maagh.* Full Moon day of the month of Maagh was very near and the month of Maagh was about to expire. (Here also it is indicated that a month in those days began and ended on the Full Moon day).

12th day of Shukla paksha (waxing phase) of Maagh month with Moon in Pushya in Cancer Constellation could be observed in the sky on 9th January, 3137 BCE. See the sky view –

Hastinapur, 9th January, 3137 BCE; 12th day of the waxing phase of Maagh, Moon in Pushya Nakshatra in Cancer Constellation

Yudhishthir thereafter directed Bhima to identify a suitable place for the horse-sacrifice. Bhima, accompanied by wise Brahmanas, went out and selected an appropriate place for conducting the rites of horse sacrifice. The place was converted into a sacrificial enclosure with fences and pathways. Bhima also got constructed three appropriate enclosures for the yajna fire. He also got constructed many houses and mansions for the guests; those included Brahmanas, Sages and ladies. Hundreds of palaces were built for the kings and princes.

Under the command of king Yudhishthir, Bhima sent messengers to invite the kings from all over the earth. Arjun had already invited many others when he went escorting the sacrificial horse for 10 months. First of all, Shri Krishna arrived accompanied by Balaram, Satyaki, Pradyumna, and other Vrishni heroes. The kings and princes thereafter started coming, and they brought valuable gifts, including gems, horses, and weapons, for their emperor. The mighty warrior Bhima offered them the most respectful adoration. King Yudhishthir personally welcomed them, displaying total humility. Unlimited food of all kinds, appropriate for varying tastes was cooked round the clock. The sacrificial compound was filled with all sorts of animals; creatures of the land and water, cattle and buffaloes, and various types of birds.

Yudhishthir repeatedly enquired from Shri Krishna about Arjun. Shri Krishna informed that great warrior Arjun was exhausted due to many battles he had fought. After that, he told that a messenger of his had informed that mighty hero Arjun was coming back victorious with the sacrificial horse. Arjun had conveyed that many kings would come to attend the Ashwamedha yajna and high honours should be extended to all of them. All should be extended equal hospitality so that a situation like the one which resulted in the killing of Shishupal in Indraprastha Rajasuya Yajna is avoided. Arjun had also informed that his loyal son Babhruvahan, King of Manipur, was also coming and special affection may be shown towards him and his mother, Chitrangada.

Yudhishthir expressed affectionate concern about Arjun who could never enjoy any peace and was always engaged in fighting wars. Bhima and his brothers enjoyed listening to stories of wealth-winner Arjun's deeds. A messenger came and informed about the arrival of Arjun *alias* Phalguni. Yudhishthir shed tears of joy and he along with his brothers, Shri Krishna, and his ministers went to receive Arjun placing Dhritarashtra in front. From citizens of Hastinapur, Arjun could hear his praises, and they eulogized him for his extraordinary bravery and heroism. After receiving an affectionate welcome from everyone, that mighty-armed hero went to take rest like a mariner who had finally reached the shore.

Meanwhile, the noble King Babhruvahan came along with his mothers Chitrangada and Ulupi. He duly saluted all his elders and was extended a warm welcome by all of them. Then they went to Kunti, Draupadi, and Subhadra, who embraced them lovingly and presented valuable and exquisite gifts. After that Babhruvahan went to pay his respects to Lord Krishna, who presented to him a beautiful chariot adorned with gold, yoked to horses of great splendour. Three days later, apparently on Maagh Purnima, Dvaipayan Vyas approached Yudhishthir and asked him to start the sacrifice during that auspicious time. He wanted Yudhishthir to distribute three times the usual gift of gold to Brahmanas. He advised that in this way, he would get the benefit of three horse sacrifices and free himself from the sin of the slaughter of his kith and kin. The final bath, after the conclusion of the sacrifice, would be highly purifying.

King Yudhishthir underwent initiation for performing the horse-sacrifice. The priests engaged for the job performed all the rituals correctly and made no mistakes. They did everything in proper sequence and as per the scriptures. Day after day, those Brahmans, learned in Vedas and skilled in conducting sacrifices, performed all the rituals. When the time came for erecting sacrificial pillars, they constructed six made of Bilva wood, six of Khadira wood, two of Devadar wood and one of Shleshmataka. Bhima added some other pillars made with gold and silk for the sake of adding beauty. In that sacrifice, three hundred animals were tied to the stakes. These animals were offered daily for the sacrifice. Finally, they sacrificed the horse, which had gone around the whole earth.

Vyas, Narad, Tumbru, Vishwavasu, Gandharvas, Apsaras and some disciples of Sage Vyas had attended the Horse-sacrifice ceremony. After cutting the sacrificial horse into pieces, they requested queen Draupadi to sit near the slaughtered horse. The priests cooked the marrow of that horse. Yudhishthir and his brothers smelled the smoke of the marrow being cooked, as that was capable of purging one from sins. The remaining limbs were poured into the fire by 16 learned priests. Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas and his disciples thereafter concluded that great horse sacrifice. Yudhishthir presented the earth to Vyas, who then replied that let this earth remain in trust with Yudhishthir and he as well as other Brahmans are given its equivalent value in wealth and gold. Yudhishthir replied that earth was won for him by Arjun and after presenting to sages, he did not wish to take that back; he himself and his brothers with Draupadi would go to live in the forests.

Great Sage Vyas replied that he had duly received the earth and then given it back to Dharmaputra, wanting that he should donate three times its value to Brahmans. Yudhishthir, along with his brothers, donated millions of gold coins to Sage Vyas, the value of which was equivalent to three times the value of standard

donation given at the time of horse sacrifice. Dvaipayan Vyas gave it to the sacrificial priests, dividing it into four parts. Vyas gave away his own share to Kunti. The sacrificial priests further divided it gladly amongst the Brahmans. After Brahmans took away as much as they wished, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras took the remaining wealth away. Thus pleased with wealth donated by king Yudhishthir, Brahmans went back very happy and satisfied to their respective places.

After having bathed on successful completion of Ashwamedha yajna, King Yudhishthir became purged of all his sins. He was shining bright amongst his brothers like the King of the gods. After that, precious gifts were given to the kings who had come to participate in the yajna; these included exclusive gems and jewels, elephants and horses, ornaments of gold and silken garments. Then the King bid farewell to Babhruvahan after gifting him enormous wealth. After that, Yudhishthir crowned the infant grandson of his cousin sister, Dushala as the King of Sindhu-Sauvira, which consisted of the entire realm which was ruled over by his ancestors. Finally, that illustrious son of Pandu adored and honoured the great Shri Krishna, Balaram, Pradyumna and other Vrishni heroes; he bid a very affectionate and grateful farewell to them.

CHAPTER 54

A respectful treatment of Dhritarashtra under the benevolent rule of Yudhishthir

After having regained their kingdom and having killed their enemies, the Pandavas ruled over the earth for 15 years. They treated Dhritarashtra with great respect, obeyed all his commands, and fulfilled all his desires. Yudhishthir had instructed his brothers and ministers to ensure that Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, who had lost all their sons, should experience no further grief. Yudhishthir also authorized Dhritarashtra to spend as much as he wanted on giving donations to Brahmanas and on the Shradh ceremonies of his sons. Yudhishthir personally ensured that all commands given by Dhritarashtra and Gandhari were carried out reverentially. Pandu's sons gave them that kind of respect and satisfaction, which they never got from their own sons. Vidur, Sanjay, and Kunti always served them with full devotion.

Dhritarashtra and Gandhari were well pleased with Yudhishthir's demeanour, but they sometimes felt hurt with Bhima's conduct, who would once in a while say some taunting words about Duryodhana or their other sons. When 15 years had passed after the war, Dhritarashtra one day gathered all his friends and addressed them tearfully. He told them that he was consumed with repentance for having ignored the sound advice given to him by Vyas, Vidur, Drona, Bhishma, and Krishna; he continued to accept the wicked demands of his son Duryodhana. He

revealed that with the object of expiating that sin, he and Gandhari would eat very little and often sleep on the floor. He thereafter told that he led a pleasant life under caring protection of Yudhishthir; had been able to perform Shradh ceremonies of his sons and had been able to give wealth in charity to Brahmans. Now he sought Yudhishthir's permission to retire to the forests along with Gandhari as he desired to live the life of ascetics.

Hearing these words, Yudhishthir felt anguished and dismayed as the kingship carried no attraction for him if Dhritarashtra was unhappy. He requested Dhritarashtra to appoint his son Yuyutsu, begotten from a Vaishya wife, as the King and promised that Yudhishthir would retire to the forest. He offered that he was ready to do anything to free Dhritarashtra from his anguish. Dhritarashtra however repeatedly persuaded Yudhishthir to grant him permission to go and live in the forests and then requested Sanjay and Kripa to intervene on his behalf. After that grasping Gandhari's hand, the old blind King fainted. Yudhishthir felt unbearable pain and grief on seeing his old uncle reduced to such condition. He gently rubbed his face and chest with water; after that, Dhritarashtra regained consciousness. During the conversation which followed it got revealed that Dhritarashtra had been starving himself, keeping his attendants in the dark. The old blind King embraced Yudhishthir and again sought permission to live the life of an ascetic in a forest. Dhritarashtra also apologized to the citizens and sought their permission to retire to the forest for penance. Many of the citizens started shedding tears hearing this.

At that point, sage Vyas appeared on the scene. He urged Yudhishthir to grant the old King's wish without any delay as he had grown old and he should be allowed to follow the path of royal seers of remote past. Yudhishthir replied that Vyas was like his father; therefore, he would not disobey him. With heavy heart, Yudhishthir granted permission to the old King for going to the forest but first, he persuaded him to take his food. Next morning after performing the morning rituals and prayers, Dhritarashtra sent Vidur to Yudhishthir's palace to inform him that after performing the initial rituals, the old king would be leaving for the forest on the coming Kartika Purnima. Before departing, he wished to conduct *Shradh* ceremonies for his sons, Bhishma and Drona; after that, he also wanted to give wealth in charity.

Yudhishthir and Arjun felt more than happy about placing massive wealth at the disposal of the old King for this purpose, but Bhima had his reservations. He reminded his brothers of all the sufferings they had to undergo for 13 years because of wily Duryodhana, and he reminded them about Draupadi's humiliation in open court. He wanted that no *Shradh* should be performed for Duryodhana as he deserved the worst even posthumously. Arjun told Bhima to abandon his hostile

feelings and adopt the path of virtue as it was good to remember only good things of the past. Yudhishthir then instructed Vidur to inform Dhritarashtra that he and Arjun would provide all the wealth he needed and also requested to overlook Bhima's hostility which resulted from sufferings in the forest. Vidur went and reproduced exact details of the conversation; Dhritarashtra was happy at the response sent by Yudhishthir.

Yudhishthir placed unlimited wealth at the disposal of the old King for conducting the *Shradh* ceremony. Dhritarashtra invited thousands of learned Brahmans and seers for the Shradh ceremony. An infinite variety of delicious food and drinks was served. Hefty *dakshinas* (donations) were given, which included jewels and gems, vehicles and clothes, goats and sheep, blankets and linen. These donations were given in the name of Bhishma, Drona, Jayadratha, Balhika, Duryodhana and each one of his other sons. Under Yudhishthir's generous instructions, a thousand coins were given in place of a hundred and ten thousand were given in place of one thousand. On that day Brahmanas were pleased with the royal downpour of riches. Even the villages, fields and islands were given in charity that day. *Shradh* ceremony was thus converted into a Daan-yajna, i.e. Donation Sacrifice.

Then on Kartik Purnima, the old King discarded his royal clothes and wore deerskins and bark garments. He honoured all his servants with wealth and riches and then accompanied by Gandhari, Kunti, Vidur, and Sanjay, the old King started for the forest. Kunti walked first carrying on her shoulders the hand of blind-folded Gandhari. Dhritarashtra walked behind Gandhari, keeping his hand on her shoulder. Yudhishthir stood with folded hands; his voice choked with tears lamenting how the blind King would be able to live in the forest without any facilities and attendants. Arjun too was plunged in despair, but he strove to maintain composure. Bhima and Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev, Vidur and Sanjay, Yuyutsu and Kripa followed the old King weeping and sobbing. All the other Pandava daughters-in-law, including Draupadi, Subhadra, Chitrangada, and Uttara also accompanied them. The citizens of Hastinapur were deeply anguished at the departure of their old King.

At that time, Kunti asked Yudhishthir to take great care of Sahadev as he was very dear to her. Yudhishthir was bewildered to know about Kunti's intention of leaving for the forest in order to serve the old King. Yudhishthir attempted to persuade Kunti, offering to go himself with Dhritarashtra but Kunti insisted that she would go and help Dhritarashtra and Gandhari in the forest as she considered them as her father-in-law and mother-in-law. She asked Yudhishthir to remember Karna, whom she wronged so severely that she would now resort to penance.

Yudhishthir again appealed to Kunti to come back as he had fought the battle because she directed him to obey the commands of Kshatriya dharma and how could she abandon them now when they had won the war. However, Kunti continued to walk ahead telling Yudhishthir to take care of Draupadi, who had been humiliated in the worst possible manner.

Pandavas with their wives continued to follow Kunti imploring her to come back and not abandon her children and asking why she wanted them to fight the battle if she did not want to enjoy the fruits of sovereignty. With tears in her eyes, Kunti told that she asked her children to fight for the sake of Draupadi, who had been dragged by the hair in open assembly during her catamenial period. She asked them to fight because they were unfairly subjugated; she wanted them to fight so that the fame of their father Pandu might not get lost. Kunti wanted them to fight so that Bhima, who possessed the strength of a thousand elephants, might not sink into insignificance; she asked them to fight so that Nakul and Sahadev might not become cheerless due to deprivation. She herself had enjoyed sovereignty won by her husband and wished to join her husband in happy regions through her penance. She then directed her children not to follow her and always remain devoted to virtue.

Seeing Kunti determined to live with the old King Dhritarashtra and Gandhari in the forest, the Pandavas and their wives came back deeply saddened to Hastinapur; abandoned by their own mother. Dhritarashtra and Gandhari also tried to persuade Kunti to go back to Hastinapur, but Kunti was so determined that even they could not change her mind. The old blind King and his accomplices reached the banks of Bhagirathi and took rest for the night. Vidura and Sanjay made the beds out of Kusha grass; the old King, Gandhari and Kunti lied down happily for the night. Vidura and others also lied down nearby. They all took a bath in Bhagirathi and after that proceeded to Kurukshetra. Then crossing the Yamuna, Dhritarashtra entered the hermitage of Shatayupa, a Kekaya ruler who had come to the forest after handing over his kingdom to his son. Shatayupa welcomed them and then accompanied them to the hermitage of Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas. Sage Vyas inducted the old King into the life of the forest dwellers; after that, Dhritarashtra and his associates took up residence adjacent to Shatayupa's hermitage, who instructed them about the new way of life.

Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti practised austerities there. Vidur and Sanjay waited on them and simultaneously practised asceticism. Many eminent sages visited them in their ashram in the forest. Sage Narad told them about many former kings who after taking up austerities had attained the realm of Indra. He then said that Pandu was living with Indra and was always thinking about securing his brother's well-being. Kunti would get reunited with him, and Gandhari would also reach the abode of Indra.

Chapter 55

Led by Yudhishthir, Pandavas go to visit the royal ascetics in their hermitage; two years later the royal ascetics were burnt to death in a forest fire

Meanwhile, Pandavas felt deeply anguished because they were deserted by their own mother and by Dhritarashtra and pious Gandhari. People of Hastinapur used to enquire about the well being of elders in the forest. Nothing could provide any relief to Pandavas when they thought about the possible difficulties being faced by the five elders in the forest. Then the slaughter of their kith and kin in the Kurukshetra war would haunt them every day. They repeatedly grieved about the deaths of Karna, Abhimanyu and Draupadi's five sons and about deaths of many other near and dear ones. They wondered why their mother decided to live in the forest, abandoning her children when they had gained sovereignty. Despair had entered their souls; only looking at Uttara's son Parikshit they could heave a sigh of relief. They could not find solace or happiness in anything. All the time they worried about those five living in the forest.

Then one-day, Sahadev said that it appeared that they all desired to go to the forest to meet their elders. He said that he was longing to see his mother, Kunti. Draupadi also expressed her deep desire to see Pritha, and she also told the emperor that all the women of his household were longing to go and meet virtuous

Kunti. King Yudhishthir at that time, ordered his ministers to get armies, treasuries, granaries, and wardrobes prepared for the journey to the forest as he wanted to visit the old King in the woods. Desirous citizens were also given the option to join. Assigning the duty of protecting Hastinapur to Yuyutsu and Dhaumya, they all proceeded to meet the elders in the forest. Led by Yudhishthir, most of the members of Pandava household moved towards Kurukshetra.

On reaching near the hermitage, they all got down from their vehicles and walked on foot. On entering the hermitage, they learnt that all the three royal ascetics had gone to the banks of Yamuna. They then ran to meet them there. Sahadev spotted Kunti and ran towards her, who embraced him with tears flowing down from her eyes. Seeing all her other four sons, Pritha tried to drag Gandhari and Dhritarashtra towards them, while all her children fell at her feet. Her sons shed tears out of grief after looking at Kunti, Gandhari, and Dhritarashtra as they had started looking very weak. They all then went to the forest retreat of the three royal ascetics.

Many hermits and ascetics expressed the desire to meet King Yudhishthir. They also wanted to be introduced to other members of the royal household. Then Sanjay introduced each of the royal visitors, saying that the one looking like a full-grown lion was Yudhishthir, the strong man with long and stout limbs was Bhima. He added that the mighty bowman of the youthful frame was Arjun, Nakula and Sahadev looked like Vishnu and Mahendra. Sanjay then said that lotus-eyed lady looking like a goddess was Draupadi; next to her was Subhadra, a lady with golden complexion and sister of Lord Krishna. Then he introduced two ladies with golden appearance named Ulupi and Chitrangada who were Arjun's wives from the Manipur state. Then he pointed that beautiful daughter of Jarasandh and princess of Magadh was the wife of Sahadev. Finally, he introduced Uttara, daughter of king Virat, wife of Abhimanyu, and the mother of Parikshit. They all sat around the Ashram floor; other ministers and warriors also sat near them.

Dhritarashtra then talked to Yudhishthir enquiring if he was living happily and peacefully with his brothers and other family members and if he was taking care of his ministers, citizens, preceptors, and servants. He inquired if he always maintained a full treasury and if he took care of the Brahmans and ensured that ladies of the household were always given full honour. Yudhishthir enquired from Dhritarashtra if his tranquillity had grown with the performance of austerities and if his mother Kunti was able to take care of him as well as of sagacious Gandhari. He expressed the hope that pious Gandhari while living the life of an ascetic, did not grieve for her slain children and did not curse the Pandavas too often. Then he suddenly enquired about Vidur who was not visible anywhere.

Dhritarashtra replied that Vidur was engaged in austere penances, living on air alone; he had grown frail. Vidur could be spotted at a distance, looking greatly emaciated and wearing matted locks. King Yudhishthir pursued him alone, running behind him into the deep forest. Then on reaching a lonely spot, Yudhishthir introduced himself. Meanwhile, Vidur stood motionless in Yoga-mudra and cast a look at the King unwaveringly. He then entered the body of Yudhishthir through his yoga power, limb by limb. He united his vital airs with those of the King and his senses with the King's senses. The body of Vidur continued to lean against the tree whereas the life had fled out of it. Then an invisible voice announced that his body should not be cremated and that he would reach happy regions known as Santanika.

King Yudhishthir thereafter came back to Dhritarashtra's hermitage and narrated the entire story, and they all got filled with wonder. Old King then offered fruits and roots to Yudhishthir. By that time, it was evening, and they all spread their beds in the open. After the night passed away, they performed their morning rites and then proceeded to look at the surroundings of the hermitage. Yudhishthir could also hear some Vedic chants recited by learned Brahmanas. He then distributed among the ascetics some golden and copper jars, deer skins and blankets, *kamandalus* and pots, and a variety of food articles. Then the emperor came back and sat in front of the three royal hermits - old King, Gandhari and his mother, Kunti. Many hermits came to visit them, including Shatayupa. Then Yudhishthir saw illustrious Sage Vyas, who took the seat which was reserved for him.

Dvaipayan Vyas enquired about the well being of Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti, Yudhishthir, and other Pandavas. He spoke very highly of Vidur and said that he took birth from the deity of virtue. After that, he said that one who was Dharmaputra was Vidur and Vidur was Yudhishthir, and he was standing like an attendant in front of Dhritarashtra. Sage Vyas announced that through the power of his asceticism, he would show some astonishing things. He asked Dhritarashtra which wish he wanted to be accomplished through the great ascetic. Vyas told Dhritarashtra that he was aware of the excruciating grief felt by the old King, Gandhari, Kunti, Draupadi, and Subhadra. He was willing to grant Dhritarashtra a boon. Dhritarashtra answered that his constant worry was to know somehow what happened to the kings and warriors who were slaughtered in the war caused by Duryodhana's wickedness; the memory of that disaster had been tormenting him day and night.

Hearing these words, wounds of Gandhari, Kunti, Draupadi, and Subhadra got revived. Gandhari told the great sage that for the last 16 years, the old King had been unable to sleep grieving for his sons and let Vyas show him his sons. Similarly,

Draupadi and Subhadra pleaded if they could be freed from the grief of losing their sons. Grief-stricken Kunti then told the story of Karna's birth. She admitted that neglecting Karna was something that tormented her day and night and she wanted the great sage to grant her some relief from that unbearable pain. Sage Vyas assured her that she was not to be blamed for what had happened as many deities could beget offspring by thought, by word, by sight, by touch and by the sexual union also.

Sage Vyas then told all of them not to grieve for their sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers as they would see them at night like men risen from sleep. He then explained that they had discharged the Kshatriya dharma and accomplished the objectives of gods by coming down on earth as humans. He then asked all of them to follow him to the banks of Bhagirathi, where they would all see their loved ones at night. They all reached the banks of Ganga and waited for the approach of night. At night the great Sage Vyas entered the sacred waters of Bhagirathi and summoned all the deceased warriors. A loud uproar was heard in water, and those kings and warriors headed by Bhishma and Drona arose by thousands. Draupadi could see her sons and her brothers, Subhadra could see Abhimanyu. Kunti could see Karna.

Sage Vyas bestowed divine vision on Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. They could see all their sons, Bhishma, Drona and all others who had been killed in that battle. All those brave men were shorn of anger and jealousy and were purged of every sin. All of them looked happy and cheerful. They met each other in a friendly manner; renouncing any enmity. They all became established in peace and amity. The sons of Pandu felt pleased to see Karna and became reconciled with him. After meeting with their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers, the ladies renounced all grief and felt happy.

In a split second, that large crowd seen inside water disappeared, leaving those assembled in awe. After all of them had departed, Sage Vyas still standing in Ganga waters granted boons to all men and women gathered there with the fulfilment of their desires. Hearing this story of reappearance and departure of his forefathers from Vaishampayan, Janamejaya, son of Parikshit and great grandson of Arjun, was pleased as well as surprised. He then expressed the desire that if sage Vyas could show him his father Parikshit, son of Abhimanyu, in his original dress and form, he would be happy as well as satisfied. At that time, highly intelligent Vyas brought Parikshit from the celestial region, and Janamejaya could thus see his father in the same form in which he lived when he departed from the world. Highly pleased Janamejaya then poured the sacred water on his father as also on himself.

The learned Brahman Astika told Janamejaya that when a sacrifice was attended by a great sage like Vyas, the one who performed the sacrificial ceremony conquered both earth and heaven. With that great yajna, Janamejaya succeeded in

reducing snakes to ashes, he was able to save Takshak, and he could follow his father's footsteps. King Janamejaya repeatedly honoured that Brahman for saying such pleasing words.

After seeing his sons and grandsons with all their friends and followers, the royal ascetic Dhritarashtra renounced his grief and came back to his hermitage. He then sent away all the common people as well as Brahmans who had come as visitors. Next day, he told Yudhishthir that he had lived in the hermitage for more than a month and that he should go back with his brothers, family members, and ministers. Seeing Yudhishthir reluctant to leave, he assured Yudhishthir that there was no anger or pain left in him and that he, along with Gandhari and Kunti, wanted to resort to severe austerities and that they were not going to survive very long and they may not be able to meet again. He should leave that very day as kingdom should not be left unprotected for very long.

Yudhishthir responded saying that he would live in the forest and serve them and also resort to austerities and that he would send his brothers back to Hastinapur. Gandhari intervened to say that Kuru lineage depended on him and that he must go back. Kunti then told Yudhishthir to go as his presence was impeding her asceticism. Finally, broken-hearted Yudhishthir said that all royal lineages had been destroyed, e.g. those of Chedis, Panchals, and Matsyas. Only Vrishnis and Lord Krishna provide him with some relief. When Yudhishthir was thus taking leave from Kunti, Sahadev intervened, with tears in his eyes and saying that he wanted to stay back with his mother. However, Kunti embracing the brave hero asked him to go back with his brother. The old King embraced all Pandava brothers one by one with affection and then permitted them to leave. In the same way, Draupadi and all other Pandava women paid respects to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti and took leave from them. The Pandavas thereafter bid farewell to their elders and left for Hastinapur.

Two years after the return of Pandavas from the hermitage of Dhritarashtra in Kurukshetra, Sage Narad came to meet Yudhishthir. The emperor enquired about the well being of three royal forest dwellers. Narad Rishi told that three of them, accompanied by Sanjay, had proceeded towards Gangadvara. Dhritarashtra had taken his sacred fire along and had engaged himself in very severe penances. They all lived practically on the water. The King lived as a hermit, but had no fixed dwelling and became a wanderer; the other three followed him. One day, he was just proceeding to take a bath in the sacred river Ganga; as he turned his face, he saw a fierce wildfire was blazing all around. The old King, Gandhari and Kunti had become so weak that they were unable to run. Therefore, they persuaded Sanjay to move to a safer place, and they themselves decided to die in the forest fire. With

great reluctance, Sanjay left them, and three of them sat in *yog-mudra* and were overtaken by the wildfire.

Hearing about this tragic end of three royal ascetics, the Pandavas bewailed with grief. They all wept like children thinking about the sad demise of their mother, helpless Gandhari and the old King Dhritarashtra. Grief-stricken Yudhishthir bemoaned saying that strange were the ways of destiny; who could imagine that the great Kuru king would thus be burnt to death in the forest fire! He, who was formerly fanned with palm leaves by beautiful ladies, was fanned by vultures with their wings after he was burnt to death by the forest fire. He then criticized the practices of Kshatriyas and hated his sovereignty as the mother of five brave Kshatriya heroes was burnt to death like a helpless creature. He then imagined that in her anguish when fire surrounded her, she would surely have called out the names of her sons one by one but alas, they were not around to extend any support! Narad tried to console Yudhishthir saying that the King would surely reach the highest heaven as he had died on the banks of Ganga after uniting with his own sacred fire. Sage Narad then advised Yudhishthir to perform their last rites.

Yudhishthir sent some wise people conversant with such last rites to go to Gangadvara and perform the rites of cremation of those three royal ascetics. All five Pandava brothers, placing Yuyutsu at their head, plunged into river Ganga to offer oblations of water to the old King, Gandhari and Kunti. They gave in charity wealth, including gold and silver, gems and jewels, cows and buffaloes, beds and foods. After cremating the remains of those three royal hermits and after immersing the ashes in Ganga, those wise men reported compliance to Yudhishthir. Yudhishthir, his four brothers and Yuyutsu stayed out for 12 days and then duly performed the shradhs of those three departed souls. Thus King Dhritarashtra left the world after having spent 15 years in Hastinapur and three years in the forest after having lost all his children in that unfortunate Mahabharat war. King Yudhishthir used to remain very cheerless after that; he somehow bore the burden of sovereignty.

CHAPTER 56

The destruction of Yadus at Dwarka and Shri Krishna's departure from the world of humans

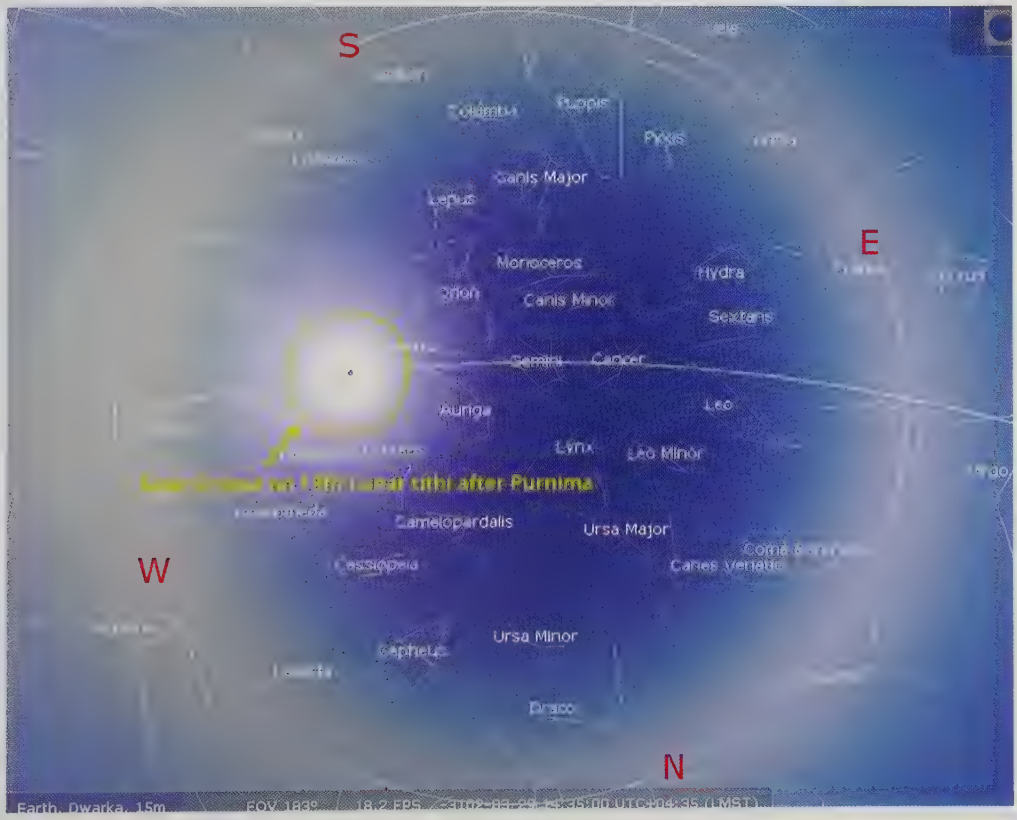
Thirty-six years after the war at Kurukshetra, Yudhishthir observed some inauspicious portents; violent winds blew, rivers started flowing backwards, the horizon always appeared to be covered with fog and terrible circles of light were seen around Sun and Moon. A little later, the Pandu king heard about the wholesale destruction of Vrishnis in club fights, and they all were stricken with grief. They heard that for 36 years Krishna ruled Dwarka and all the Yadavas spent their time in unrestrained self-indulgence, and they lost all sense of humility. They regularly indulged in drinking and gambling. They insulted their preceptors and the Brahmans.

Sometime later, the Yadavas saw that great Sages like Vishwamitra, Kanva, and Narad had arrived in Dwarka. Without showing any great respect and intending to play a prank, the Yadavas caused Samba, Krishna's son by Jambavati, to disguise as a woman and then asked these great hermits to tell if she would give birth to a son or a daughter. The ascetics got infuriated and cursed that he/she would produce a dreadful iron bolt with which the families of Yadavas would get exterminated. They also said that Balaram would enter the sea, renouncing his body and a hunter named Jara would kill Shri Krishna with his arrow. After informing Krishna about the course of events, the ascetics went away from Dwarka. Shri Krishna declared that warning issued by the great sages would prove to be true.

Seeing those things which forewarned the perverse course of time and after looking at the sky, Shri Krishna one day said that No Moon day coincided with the 13th lunation, when solar eclipse had occurred, similar to the one seen before the Mahabharat war.

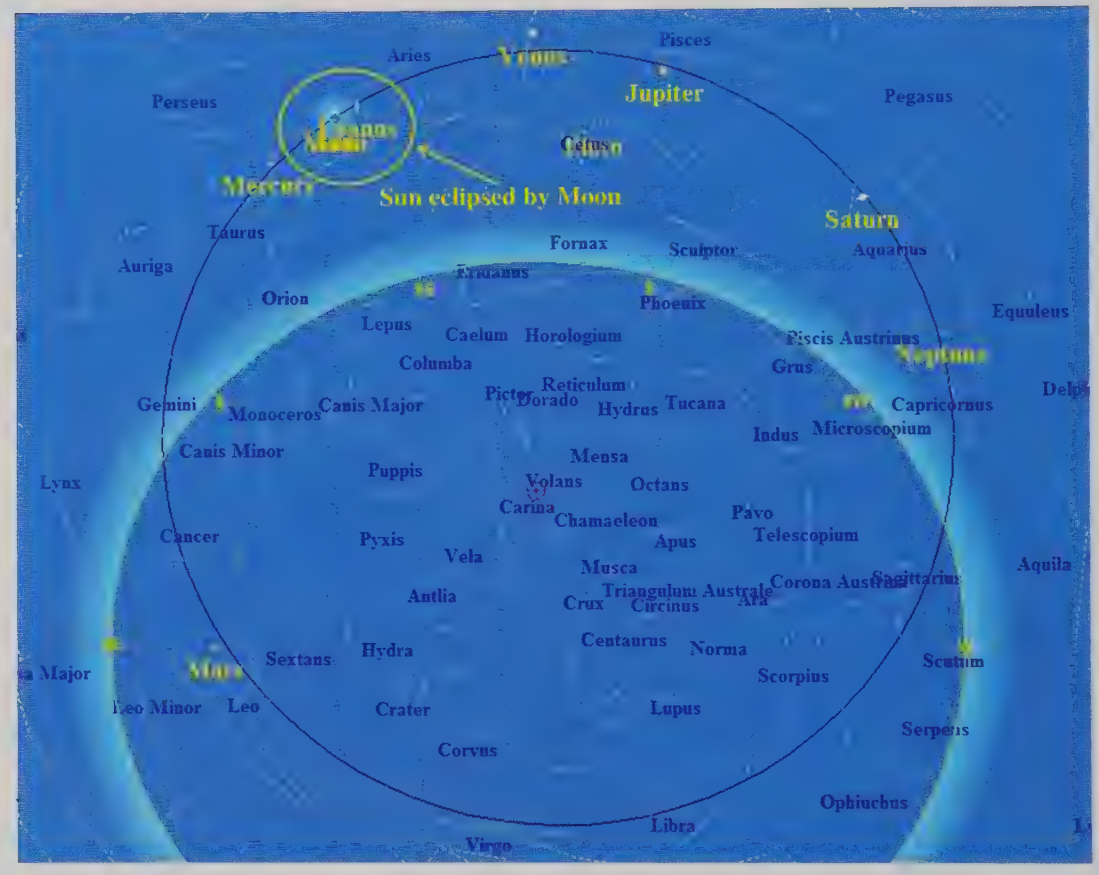
एवं पश्यन् हृषीकेश: सम्प्राप्तं काल पर्ययम् ।
त्रयोदश्याममावस्यां तान् दृष्ट्वा प्राब्र वीदिदम् ।। मौसल पर्व 16/2/18
चतुर्दशी पञ्चदशी कृतेयं राहुणा पुन: ।
प्राप्ते वै भारते युद्धे प्राप्ता चाद्य क्षयाय न: ।। मौसल पर्व 16/2/19

Meaning: After seeing the perverse course of events and after observing that Amavasya was coinciding with the thirteenth lunation, Shri Krishna summoned the Yadavas and told them that fourteenth lunation had been made the fifteenth by Rahu once more. Such a solar eclipse was seen before Mahabharat war also. It has once more appeared, foreboding destruction of the Yadavas. The solar eclipse, referred to here, was observable from Dwarka on 29th March, 3102 BCE; see the sky shot generated using Stellarium software –



Total Solar eclipse observable from Dwarka (23°N, 69°E) on 29th March, 3102 BCE – Stellarium

Planetarium Skyview of this very Solar Eclipse from Dwarka on the Amavasya of Jyeshta Month was observed precisely 26 days earlier on 3rd March, 3102 BCE (Historical Year 3103 BCE).



Total Solar eclipse observable from Dwarka (23°N, 69°E) on 3rd March, 3102 BCE – Planetarium

This was a unique and rare Solar Eclipse which could be seen for more than 5 hours. The eclipse started at around 11 AM, was seen as total eclipse from Dwarka between 2 and 3 PM; it ended at about 4.30 PM. Shri Krishna at that time advised Yadus to go for pilgrimage near the seashore, *i.e.* in Prabhas Kshetra. They, along with their families, went to the seaside in Prabhas Kshetra. These were terrifying times. The four horses took away the divine chariot of Shri Krishna from above the sea-water and the charioteer Daruka was just left watching with shock. The Yadavas started drinking, dancing, gambling, boasting, and indulged in furious fights.

Those foolish and inebriated Yadavas were somewhat anxious when they learnt the next day that Samba had actually produced a dreadful iron bolt that

looked like a messenger of death. They deliberated amongst themselves and then finally grounded that iron club into a fine powder, which they scattered in the sea. Nothing happened for some time. Then there came rainy season and there came up a dense crop of rushes in the place where fine iron dust had been strewn.

One day Yadavas went to the beach and spent the whole day in drink, dance, and entertainment. The liquor began to show its effect. They then began to talk unrestrained, followed by arguments and then the fight. In the very sight of Krishna, Balaram began to drink with Kritavarman, Satyaki and Pradyumna. Then Satyaki mocked at Kritavarman, who had slaughtered Pandava survivors in their sleep after the war, saying that which hero would slay the warriors and the children when they were in deep slumber. Greatly enraged, Kritavarman ridiculed Satyaki saying that he had killed armless Bhurishrava when he sat fasting in the battlefield. Furious with anger Satyaki pounced upon Kritavarman saying that he would soon follow five sons of Draupadi who were slain in sleep by him. Satyaki cut off the head of Kritavarman, and some Yadavas present there killed both Satyaki and Pradyumna, Lord Krishna's son. A free fight followed. It appeared as if every blade of grass had got converted into an iron bolt; consequently, the Andhakas, the Bhojas, the Vrishnis killed each other in anger.

Knowing that the hour of destruction had arrived, Shri Krishna stood there still. He remembered that his own end was also near as Gandhari's curse would prove right since 36 years had passed by after the devastating war fought at Kurukshetra. He also knew that the curse of the ascetics would annihilate the Yadava race. Janardan saw that his sons Samba, Charudeshna, Pradyumna, and his grandson Aniruddha were all killed. Shri Krishna was mad with anger, and he killed a large number of people present there. Balaram could not be seen anywhere; therefore, Krishna, Daruka and Vabhru left that place searching for him. Balaram, on the other hand, was overwhelmed with shame and grief. He sat thoughtfully under a tree reclining his back against its trunk.

In the meantime, Krishna had ordered Daruka, his charioteer to go to Hastinapur and inform Arjun of that great carnage of the Yadus and then bring Arjun along. Krishna asked Vabhru to protect the women for some time. After that, Krishna asked Balaram to wait for a while; he went to request his father Vasudeva to ensure the safety of women. Shri Krishna told him that very soon Arjun would reach to get everyone to a safe place. When Lord Krishna went back to the forest, he saw Balaram flowing into the sea, departing from the world of humans. Sitting in a yoga posture, Balaram had submerged into the ocean with a light resembling the white serpent leading his way. Shri Krishna wandered for some time in that solitary forest, thinking that the hour of the destruction of Yadus had arrived. He

also said that the time for his own departure had also come. Thinking in this manner, Krishna did lie on the floor and fell asleep. In that forest, by the side of the beach, a hunter looking for the game was roaming. He saw Janardan lying on the floor and mistook him for a deer. He bent his bow and shot an arrow, which pierced the foot of Shri Krishna. When Jara the hunter, saw that his victim was dressed in yellow robes, rapt in Yoga, he touched the feet of Lord Krishna out of fear and remorse. Lord Krishna, however, comforted him, ascended the celestial region, and filled the heaven with his splendour.

Shri Krishna's messenger Daruka had reached Hastinapur and informed the Pandus about the destruction of Yadavas. They were all grief-stricken; Arjun immediately left with Daruka for Dwarka. He felt despondent to see the city deserted and in a state of mourning. He went straight to Lord Krishna's father Vasudeva; seeing him all the women of Krishna's household started wailing. He saw Vasudeva lying on the floor, writhing in unbearable pain. He embraced Arjun and then cried, remembering his brothers, sons, grandsons, and friends who had all got killed. He was repenting why the death did not come to him, and he continued to live without them. He did not blame Satyaki, Kritavarman, or Pradyumna for the slaughter, but said that the curse of the ascetics had ruined Dwarka and its inhabitants.

Knowing that Gandhari's curse also was bound to prove right, Krishna himself did not try to prevent the catastrophe. Wailing Vasudeva then added that last time when Krishna had left home in search of Balaram, he only said that Arjun would come, he would perform the funeral rites and would provide for the women and children. Wailing Vasudeva also said that he had decided that he would neither eat nor live. There were no survivors; the kingdom, the women, and children were all left under Arjun's protection. Vasudeva also recollected what Krishna had said before leaving him. He had been told that after Arjun departs from the city, Dwarka would be inundated by the ocean.

इमां च नगरीं सद्य: प्रतियाते धनंजये II
प्राकाराट्टालकोपेतां समुद्र: प्लावयिष्यति I मौसल पर्व 16/6/23

Meaning: *Krishna had told his father Vasudeva* that the ocean would swallow this city of Dwarka after Arjun's departure with its inhabitants.

Feeling much depressed himself, Arjun submitted to Vasudeva that without having Krishna around, he himself did not feel like living on earth. He told him that he would first remove the women and children to Indraprastha. He called the Vrishni officers to the great hall named Sudharma. Then he briefed them that he would take with him survivors of Vrishnis and Andhakas as the sea would soon engulf the city of Dwarka. He told them they should quickly take their valuables

and get ready to leave for Shakraprastha where Vajranabh, Shri Krishna's grandson, would be their King. On the seventh day at sunrise, they all must go.

शक्रप्रस्थमहं नेष्ये वृष्णयन्धकजनं स्वयम् I
इदं तु नगरं सर्वं समुद्रः प्लावयिष्यति II मौसल पर्व 16/7/10
सज्जी कुरुत यानानि रत्नानि विविधानि च I
वज्रोऽयं भवतां राजा शक्रप्रस्थे भविष्यति II मौसल पर्व 16/7/11

Meaning: Arjun addressed the officers of Vrishni race, saying that he would take away with him the survivors amongst the Vrishnis and the Andhakas as the sea would soon engulf the city. They should take with them their chariots and horses as well as their valuables. From now onwards Shri Krishna's grandson, Vajranabh, would be their King at Shakraprastha.

Arjun passed that night in the palace of Shri Krishna. When he got up in the morning, he was stunned to find that his mother's brother Vasudeva had departed from the world of humans. Heart-rending sounds of wailing were heard in the palace from weeping ladies. Arjun took the body of Vasudeva in a carriage for last rites. His four wives, viz., Devaki, Bhadra, Rohini and Madira jumped into the funeral pyre. Last rites of Vasudeva and his four wives were completed after offering the water oblations. After that, Arjun went to the place, where dead bodies of Vrishni heroes were lying scattered. The last rites were performed as ordained by scriptures.

CHAPTER 57

The Tsunami destroyed the city of Dwarka and Arjun's caravan was looted on way

Arjun accompanied by Vrishni heroes then went in search of the bodies of Shri Krishna and Balaram. These were cremated with full honour by grief-stricken Arjun. He also performed the last rites for many other relatives and warriors. After that in the morning of the seventh day, Arjun quickly left with women and children; the survivors amongst Vrishnis followed him on their horses and chariots. The number of widowed women, being escorted by that noble son of Pandu, was very large. The Andhaka and the Vrishni warriors as well as other adults faithfully surrounded them from all sides under directions from Arjun. They all were carrying their valuables with them. As soon as they left, the ocean engulfed the city of Dwarka, which was still having gems, jewels and gold floating around on its waters.

निर्याते तु जने तस्मिन् सागरो मकरालयः।
द्वारकां रत्नसम्पूर्णो जलेणाप्लावयत तदा ।। मौसल पर्व 16/7/41 ।।
यद् यद्धि पुरुषव्याघ्रो भूमेस्तस्या व्यमुन्चत।
तत् तत् सम्पलावयामास सलिलेन स सागरः।। मौसल पर्व, 16/7/42 ।।

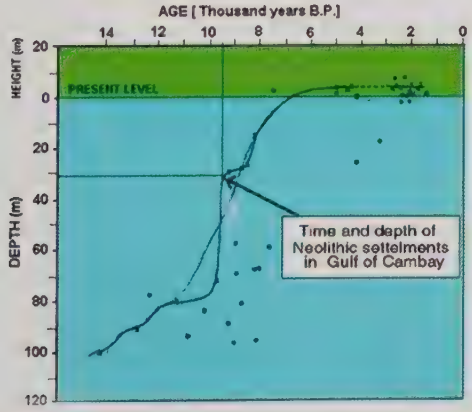
Meaning: After all the people had left, the home of sharks and alligators, namely the ocean flooded Dwarka; riches of every kind were floating all over the

waters. Whatever portion of ground was passed over, the sea immediately flooded it with its waters. Seeing this, the inhabitants started moving faster and faster.

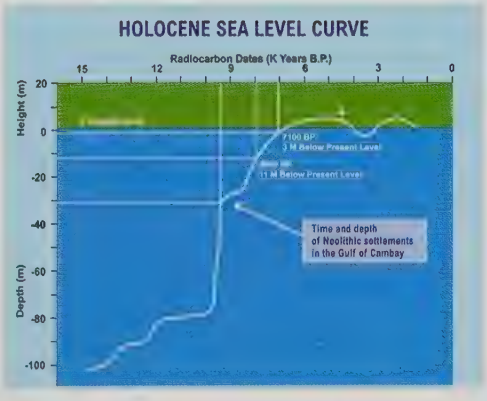
It would be desirable to ponder over what might have actually happened in Dwarka? Where and when Dwarka was built and where is it located at present?

Mahabharat does not make any reference to the sinking of the city of Dwarka due to any rise in the level of seawater. It only talks of massive destruction due to Tsunami waves. Shri Krishna had warned his father that the ocean would swallow the city of Dwarka after the departure of its inhabitants. After the people had left Dwarka escorted by Arjun, the sea engulfed the town; riches of every kind were floating all over the waters. Whatever portion of ground was crossed over, the ocean immediately flooded it with its waters. Seeing this, the inhabitants started moving faster and faster. The sea-level curve prepared by National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa, also does not indicate any increase in the water level around 5000 years back.

The sea-level curve prepared by the NIO has revealed that during 6000-4000 BP, the seawater level remained 2-4 meters higher than what is there at present. Thus 5000 years ago, the sea-water level was 2-4 meters higher than the present level. Therefore some areas located precisely on the western coast were almost underwater during Mahabharat times, but in around 2000 BP the water level came down just by 2-4 meters, and as a result, some additional land might have been reclaimed in the Western Coast after 2000 BP. Let us have one look at Sea Level curves prepared by the NIO.



Holocene Sea Level Fluctuations on Western Indian Continental margin: An Update (Hashimi and Nigam -1995; Journal of Geological Society of India,)



The Sea-level curve prepared by NIO; R. Nigam (http://bit.ly/2r8ke1A) – 2012

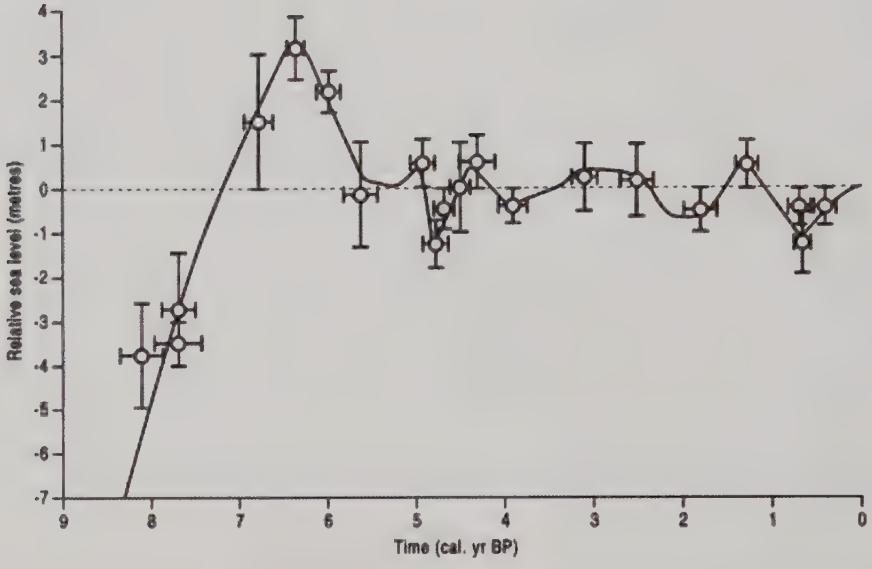


Fig. 6. Holocene sea-level fluctuations inferred from sea-level index points from the southern Langebaan Lagoon salt marsh, South Africa. Horizontal error bars refer to analytical uncertainty in radiocarbon age calibration (2σ range), and vertical error bars refer to uncertainty in sea level predictions derived from organic matter and shell material indicators (modified from Compton, 2001).

University of Pennsylvania; Scholarly Commons Departmental Papers (EES) Department of Earth and Environmental Science 4-1-2005 - Holocene sea-level changes in the Indo-Pacific

Since there was no increase in seawater level during 6000–4000 years BP, it is almost impossible to conclude that Dwarka got submerged due to the rise in seawater level. There is only fluctuation of 2-4 meters up and down around 5000 years back, with water maintaining the present level. Therefore, we need not search for Dwarka under the sea. From the description in Mausal Parva of Mahabharat, it appears that a tsunami in Dwarka caused massive destruction. There can be several reasons for Tsunami, including earthquakes on the surface of the ocean. The speed of the Tsunami decreases as it enters shallow water, and the height of the wave grows. When a tsunami finally reaches the shore, it may appear as a rapidly rising or falling tide. The water level onshore can rise many feet. A tsunami wave can have a period (time gap) in the range of ten minutes to two hours and a wavelength over 300 miles (500 km). The description in Mahabharat does give time to the inhabitants to run away, probably because of the gap of time in each succeeding tsunami wave.

Flooding tsunami waves tend to carry loose objects and people out to the sea when they retreat. Tsunamis may reach a maximum vertical height onshore above

sea level, called a run-up height, of 98 ft. (30 meters). The western coast of India has been a Tsunami prone area. Morpho-dynamic and tsunami simulation studies have concluded that tsunami wave height along the Gujarat coast ranges from 2m to 10m (Nigam, 2018). A 3.5 m high tsunami wave reportedly hit the Gujarat coast around 2000 years BP. There is a traditional history of tsunami waves and intense storms hitting the Gujarat coast. The historical tsunami event dates back to 326 BC (Rastogi; A catalogue of tsunamis in the Indian Ocean). To my mind, Mahabharat describes a tsunami, which destroyed the city of Dwarka.

The actual location of ancient Dwarka, Lord Krishna's capital city in the Saurashtra Peninsula, has never been proved beyond doubt. There are at least eight sites which are considered to be Krishna's Dwarka. The ancient texts, which mention the city, are divided on the subject. According to the Adi Parva and Sabha Parva of the Mahabharat, Vayu Purana and Vishnu Purana, the family of Shri Krishna had shifted from Mathura to Kushasthali. Kushasthali was located on the western side, adjacent to Raivatak hill and Prabhas area; they had moved because they wanted to get rid of constant wars with Jarasandh, son-in-law of Kansa (2/14/50,51,67). On the other hand, Harivamsa Purana, Bhagavad Purana, and Mausal Parva of Mahabharat show the location of the city adjacent to the sea. Buddhist text Ghata Jatak mentions that the city had on one side the sea, and on the other mountain.

These descriptions make it clear that Dwarka was situated near a Hill and near a water body. The city had some grand buildings and a big Conference Room. Kushasthali and Prabhas were part of it or were adjacent to this kingdom. The Mahabharat text does not make any reference to the reclamation of land from the sea for building the city of Dwarka. It was in the Mausal Parva for the first time that Dwarka's foundation in or near the sea and its later destruction due to Tsunami have been mentioned (Sankalia, 1964).

The modern Dwarka, Bet Dwarka, or submerged Dwarka discovered by Dr S R Rao do not fulfil any of these criteria listed above. They were neither in ancient Kushasthali nor in Prabhas Kshetra nor were Raivatak Hills located in the vicinity. All these three criteria are fulfilled by Junagarh District (and not by Jamnagar District). Dvaravati or Dwarka of modern Junagarh was apparently the capital of Saurashtra; it was also known as Kushasthali. The Mahabharat and the Puranas often refer to Kushasthali or Dwarka as the capital of Anarta or Anartadesha, which may be seen as equivalent to Coastal Saurashtra.

The available literature indicates the existence of two different Dwarkas at two different periods. One Dwarka was that of Vasudeva, and the other was that of Shri Krishna. Dr P S Thakker, a senior scientist with ISRO Centre at Ahmedabad, has

believed that there was Vasudeva's old Dwarka and after that, Lord Krishna had developed new Dwarka. Both were located in Prabhas Kshetra of Junagarh district adjoining Raivatak (Girnar) Hills. Dr Thakker added that remote sensing imagery had revealed the presence of milollite limestone in Navda village in the vicinity of Girnar (Raivatak) Hills, which suggests the presence of sea also in this area. He opined that further excavations and research needed to be carried out. Dr Alok Tripathi, a scientist from the Institute of Oriental and Orissan Studies, Cuttack, has concluded after examining the Landsat TM FCC imagery that Junagarh has Raivatak, *i.e.* Girnar hills on one side, and Prabhas on the other. The remote imagery has also displayed two big rivers making a circular feature revealing dried-up water body (*could be a small gulf like structure or backwaters).* Thus, remote sensing has helped identify the real Dwarka, and there is a need for systematic surveys and excavations.

After reading several scholars and scientists on the subject, I tend to believe that there is an element of truth in several different and contradictory claims. When Shri Krishna shifted from Mathura to Kushasthali area towards the Western Coast along with the Yadavas, many settlements were developed during the next 80 years of their stay in the Anarta area. However, it is not easy to discard the most convincing thesis of Dr S R Rao, who explored along the existing Dwarkadhish temple in modern Dwarka. Dr Rao reached a submerged settlement allegedly looking quite similar to Krishna's Dwarka, dated as belonging to 1500 BCE.

Astronomical dates of references in Mahabharat relate it to the period 3000 BCE; archaeological evidence proves with reasonable certainty that most of the kingdoms which participated in Mahabharat war had Early or Mature Harappan sites in their territories in 3000 BCE. Then how do we explain the difference of 1500 years, between 3000 BCE and 1500 BCE? In fact, the excavations were carried out by Dr Sankalia, Ansari, and Mate along the Southern wall of Dwarkadhish Temple in 1963 and by Shri S R Rao in 1979-80 along the Northern wall. These provided incontrovertible evidence that modern Dwarkadhish temple township was 8^{th} in the series. First one was of 15^{th} century BCE; third settlement with first Dwarkadhish Temple, dedicated to Lord Krishna, belonged to the 1st century BCE - 2^{nd} century CE; the fifth one related to 8^{th} – 9th century CE. Excavations have revealed that seventh temple-cum-settlements belonged to 14^{th} century CE, and modern Dwarkadhish temple along with its township, dedicated to Lord Krishna was built in 16^{th} century CE.

These facts only prove that Hindus never abandon their sacred sites. With the rise and fall in seawater level, the topography of coastal areas logically changes. With the marginal fall of 2-4 meters in seawater level around 2000 BP, some more land naturally became available in the coastal region. This land was used for

constructing Dwarkadhish Temple Township, and that is why Harivamsa Purana mentioned that Dwarka was built after reclaiming a part of the land from the sea. No such reference is found in Mahabharat. It was probably this most sacred and most ancient temple township area which was explored by Dr S R Rao. On the other hand, Shri Krishna's Dwarka may be waiting to be explored, located somewhere in Junagarh, adjoining Girnar (Raivatak) Hills adjacent to Prabhas area and located in and around Navda village. It appears that the sea was touching some of those areas located in Junagarh 5000 years back.

Arjun was taking the survivors from Dwarka towards Hastinapur and was encamping them in forests and hills, by the side of rivers. After reaching the prosperous land of five rivers, Arjun set up a camp on land rich in corn and cattle. Some of the robbers then observed that all those women were being protected only by Arjun, as the other men seemed to have no energy. Then those robbers gathered in thousands, and they attacked the caravan to loot it. Arjun warned them to desist from any such attempts if they wished to live, but they ignored these warnings. Arjun then took his heavenly bow Gandiva, but he had difficulty in stringing it. Then, he could not call his celestial weapons to presence. Seeing this dreadful failure of the prowess of his arms and loss of weapons, Arjun felt ashamed and remorseful.

Meanwhile, robbers succeeded in robbing many women and in abducting others. Arjun started shooting his arrows, but after killing some robbers, he found his arrows exhausted for the first time. Thus, before the very eyes of Arjun, the barbarians succeeded in carrying off the loot and also abducted many Yadava women.

All these events, combined with the exhaustion of his arrows, plunged Arjun in dejection. He was surprised at the turn of destiny. He finally brought all the survivors to Kurukshetra. They were settled in different places; some in Kurukshetra; some in Indraprastha and some on the banks of Sarasvati. Shri Krishna's wives Rukmini, Haimavati and Jambavati entered fire, whereas Satyabhama and other queens entered the forest to live the life of ascetics. Arjun then installed Vajranabh as the King of Indraprastha. He also presented the surviving men before King Vajranabh. Vajranabh was the-great-grandson of Lord Krishna, grandson of Pradyumna and son of Aniruddha.

Dejected at heart, feeling extremely sad and sighing, again and again, Arjun then entered the cottage of Sage Vyas. Arjun lamented that the lotus-eyed glorious Shri Krishna had departed from the world of humans along with Balaram. In Prabhas through the curse of ascetics, a great slaughter of the Vrishni heroes had taken place. The Bhojas, the Vrishnis, the Andhakas slaughtered one another, and

the sea had devoured the city of Dwarka. Sobbing Arjun submitted that he was unable to reconcile with the death of Krishna and that he did not wish to live in the world without him. Then bemoaning Arjun lamented that when he was escorting the Yadu women to safety, they were attacked, looted and some were even abducted before his very eyes. For the first time, his quiver became empty, and his weapons got exhausted. Helplessly he looked around and finding Krishna nowhere his heart sank in despair.

Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas then tried to console Arjun saying that Yadus were destined to get destroyed; therefore, he should not grieve for them. Lotus-eyed Shri Krishna was capable of averting the disaster, but he permitted it to happen. Out of his love, he had agreed to become the charioteer of Arjun, wielding his Sudarshan Chakra. Arjun then added that, after the departure of Vishnu in the form of Krishna, his vision had grown dim, and he did not wish to live in the world. Sage Vyas felt that Arjun and his brothers had accomplished the purpose of their lives; the time had come for their departure from the world. Having heard these words of the great Sage Vyas, Arjun returned to the city of Hastinapur. Approaching Yudhishthir, he placed all the information before him.

CHAPTER 58

After crowning Parikshit as the King, Pandavas departed from Hastinapur

Having heard the details of the great destruction of the Yadu race and after learning about Shri Krishna's departure from the world of humans, King Yudhishthir decided to retire from the world. His brothers and Draupadi chose to accompany him. **Yudhishthir at that time was around 108 years' old,** Bhima was about 106 years old, Arjun was in his 104th year, whereas twins had entered their 102nd year. They repeatedly acknowledged that time was all-powerful! Yudhishthir installed Parikshit, grandson of Arjun and son of Abhimanyu, as the King, Yudhishthir was filled with sorrow when he took leave from Subhadra saying that her grandson would rule as the King in Hastinapur and that she should take care of him.

In Adi Parva (1/2/13) of Mahabharat, there is a reference that the war was fought during the sandhi of Dwapar Yuga and Kali Yuga. It is believed by millions of people that Dwapara Yuga came to an end heralding the beginning of Kali Yuga when Parikshit was crowned as the King of Hastinapur after Shri Krishna's departure from the world of humans. Two of the most eminent ancient astronomers of India - Aryabhatt and Varahamihira, in their books Aryabhatiya and Suryasiddhanta have said that a spectacular assemblage of Moon, Sun and other five bright planets was seen on the eastern horizon on 18th February midnight (at dawn on 19th February) in 3102 BCE *(Aryabhatiya; Gitikapada-5 & Kalakriyapada-10 & Suryasiddhanta with Commentary by Ebbenizer Burgess*). Aryabhatt had written in

499 CE that when three yugas had elapsed and 3600 years of Kali Yuga had already elapsed, and he himself was 23 years of age, he completed writing his book entitled Aryabhatiya. Aryabhatt was born in 476 CE; therefore the beginning of the Kali era comes to 3102 BCE (3601-476-23)

It was a thrilling and hair-raising experience when Stellarium software, using NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris, displayed this spectacular assemblage in the sky precisely on 19th February at dawn in 3102 BCE (astronomical year displayed by the software is 3101 BCE whereas the historical year is 3102 BCE). It is a matter of pride to share this sky simulation with the readers, which proves the scientific basis of the belief coming down from thousands of years that Kali Era (Kali Yuga) began on 18th -19th February 3102 BCE.

Delhi, India. All seven planets at the entry point of Aries (Mesha) displaying famous Kali Era Conjunction on 19th February, 3101 BCE, at 7.20 AM (Stellarium Sky shot); Astronomical date 19th February, 3101 BCE, and Historical date 19th February, 3102 BCE

Even inscriptional evidence relates the beginning of Kali Yuga to 3102 BCE. The famous Aihole inscription of eminent Chalukya king of the 7th century says that 3735 years have already elapsed in Kaliyuga after Mahabharat war and 556th year of Shalivahan era is running. This implies that 3736th Kali Era was running in the Shaka Era 556 CE, which is equivalent to 634 (556+78) CE. By deducting 634 from 3736, we arrive at 3102 BCE.

King Yudhishthir, along with his brothers, offered water oblations and performed shradhs of his maternal uncle Vasudeva, his benefactors Lord Krishna and Balaram. Particularly in honour of Janardan, the King served food to Brahmans and gave in charity gems and jewels, gold and silver, clothes and food *etc.* He called the citizens of Hastinapur and informed them about his decision. When anxious people disagreed with him due to anxiety, he persuaded them to honour his decision. Bearing garments of deerskin and bark, all five Pandava brothers accompanied by Draupadi left Hastinapur. Before leaving, they donated all their ornaments and belongings. Only Arjun took his Gandiva with two quivers of arrows. A dog then joined six of them from Hastinapur itself. Ulupi, the daughter of Naga chief, entered the waters of Ganga; Chitrangada went back to Manipur. The other ladies stayed back with Parikshit. All the five Pandava brothers, accompanied by Draupadi and that dog, went on a journey of Bharatavarsha, observing the religion of renunciation. When they reached near the sea, the god of fire asked Arjun to cast off his Gandiva in water; he then threw Gandiva and the two quivers in the seawater. There they also saw Dwarka destroyed by the sea.

After that, the Pandavas went towards South and Southwest. Finally, they turned towards the north and saw the Himalayas. They were observing Yoga; after crossing a part of Himalaya and after crossing a desert of sand, they saw the grand Meru Mountain. When they were proceeding towards Meru mountain observing Yoga, first Draupadi dropped down on earth, after that Sahadev fell down on the ground. Leaving them behind, the other four accompanied by the dog proceeded ahead. After going a little farther, handsome Nakul fell down; after that, Arjun of great prowess fell on the ground. Finally, Bhima also collapsed, and only Yudhishthir went on, accompanied by the dog and without looking back.

Indra then came and asked Yudhishthir to ascend the chariot for reaching heaven. Yudhishthir, however, refused to go without his brothers and Draupadi. Indra then informed that they had all reached the celestial regions after discarding their bodies; only Yudhishthir was ordained to go along with his body. Yudhishthir after that, wanted to take the loyal dog along. Indra told him that a dog could not

be taken to heaven. However, Yudhishthir was adamant that he would never abandon a being that was under his protection, is devoted to him and seeks his help. Hearing these words of noble Yudhishthir the dog transformed itself into the deity of virtue and told Yudhishthir that he had once again passed the test of righteousness as he even renounced the celestial car to protect one who was helpless and devoted.

Then sitting in a celestial car, Yudhishthir went to the celestial region. There the great sages welcomed him, saying that only Yudhishthir could achieve the happiest divine area. Yudhishthir replied that whether those regions are heaven or hell, happy or miserable, he wished to proceed immediately to where his brothers were because he did not want to live anywhere separated from his brothers and Draupadi.

Taken to heaven, Yudhishthir saw Duryodhana, bathed in prosperity, sitting on a heavenly throne. Yudhishthir got overpowered with anger and grief and said in a loud voice that he did not wish to be in the company of wily, wicked, and immoral Duryodhana, who got the earth and its inhabitants destroyed. Narad then explained that Duryodhana and his brothers were Rakshasas. Still, he earned a place in heaven by discharging the Kshatriya dharma of dying while fighting with his weapons in a battle in Kurukshetra. Yudhishthir however again said that he wanted to see what regions have been obtained by his noble brothers, pious Draupadi, Karna, Dhrishtadhyumna, Satyaki, and Drupada. Yudhishthir insisted that he would live in those regions, good or bad, which have been assigned to his brothers and his other noble associates.

Celestials sent a messenger with Yudhishthir, who took him through a hellish path filled with filth, rotting dead bodies, worms and vultures. There were awful smell and frightening sounds. Yudhishthir was so sad and stupefied that he almost decided to return. However he heard the voices of his near and dear ones, including Bhima, Arjun, Nakul, Sahadev, Karan, Draupadi and her five sons, to stay with them for a short while. Yudhishthir then wondered that all his beliefs about the consequences of good and bad deeds were being turned upside down. The noble heroes devoted to truth and Vedas, righteous in their deeds, performers of sacrifices were being punished, and persons of immoral deeds, like Duryodhana, were being rewarded in that celestial region.

Overwhelmed with grief and annoyance, Dharmaputra talked to the messenger, rebuked the celestials and dharma himself and asked the messenger to go and convey to Indra that he would stay in hell with those noble people and had no desire to join the wicked ones in heaven. Immediately after that, celestials, headed by Indra, came there. Suddenly, the scenes of torture; there was no stench and no

heart-rending cries. The place all around was clean and green, with a cool breeze and pleasant smell. Then, Indra addressed Yudhishthir saying that what was shown to him, were only illusions. A king always has to perform good and bad deeds. Therefore, Yudhishthir was given a glimpse of the hell so that he is purged of his sins, if any. However, after that, he would always in future enjoy the happiest celestial regions. All his brothers, Karna, Draupadi, and others have attained the highest heavens.

The god of righteousness appeared before Yudhishthir saying that this was the third test which his son Yudhishthir was made to undergo from which he had come out victorious again. None of his four brothers, neither Draupadi nor Karna committed any sin to deserve hell. They were truthful, righteous, courageous, and benevolent; therefore, they deserved the highest heavens. After that, Dharmaraj asked Yudhishthir to bathe in celestial Ganga and then renounce his human body. After doing so, he went to the place where he saw his own people. Arjun was in the company of Govinda, Karna was seen resembling a dozen suns in splendour, Bhima was sitting amid Maruts, Nakul and Sahadev were blazing with effulgence sitting near Ashvins. Draupadi was decked in lotuses looking like a goddess of prosperity; Pandu was united with Kunti and Madri. Dhritarashtra, along with Gandhari, obtained the region belonging to Kubera and Bhishma acquired the dignity of the Vasus. In response to a question from Janamejaya, Vaishampayan replied that most of these people went back to their original forms after facing the consequences of their actions. Finally, Mahabharat has also recorded that the entire story narrated by Sage Vyas is history.

पुण्यो ऽयम इतिहासाख्यः पवित्रं चेदम उत्तमम।
कृष्णेन मुनिना विप्र नियतं सत्यवादिना॥ स्वर्ग-आरोहण पर्व 18/5/36 ॥

Meaning: that truthful and honest Sage Vyas had composed Mahabharat as the fascinating history, which is perfect, accurate, as well as excellent. In this manner, Janamejaya heard the profound history of Mahabharat war, composed by Sage Vyas, from Vaishampayan. After giving in charity a lot of wealth to Brahmanas, king Janamejaya returned from Takshashila to Hastinapur.

APPENDIX 1

Basic Concepts of Ancient Indian Observational Astronomy

In the beginnings of the Holocene, about 11000 years back, human beings started living on the banks of the rivers in caves, forests, and huts. Like modern-day humans, they were blessed with eyes, ears, tongue, memory, and analytical capabilities. The sky was there all the time for them to observe. They could naturally observe the waxing and waning phases of Moon, northward and southward movement of the Sun connected to the changes in weather conditions. They could observe the movement of other planets revolving around the Sun, which included Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

The ancient people, including the Indians, could see that Sun rose in the East every morning, reached the highest point around mid-day, started declining, and then set in the West in the evening. Another common observation was that there was a daily shift in the point of sunrise on the horizon. Sun's oscillation from south to north and north to south could also be noticed, leading to the identification of four cardinal points, namely the winter solstice and the summer solstice, the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox. That is why for them the year consisted of two parts, *Uttarayan* beginning of the northward movement of the Sun with the winter solstice and *Dakshinayan* beginning of the southward movement with summer solstice.

Observation of Planets and Constellations by ancient Indians –

The ancient Indians also watched millions of stars and the movement of the Moon and the Sun among them. They could observe the waxing and waning phases of Moon. The movement of the Moon amongst the stars gave rise to the concept of *Nakshatras*; these are also known as Lunar Mansions. The Moon, like the Sun, also appeared to be moving along the similar ecliptic path. The other five visible planets, along with the two Intersecting points named Rahu and Ketu, also appeared to be following the same ecliptic path. The 'ecliptic' is an imaginary elliptical circle around the earth in which Sun and Moon, five visible Grahas (planets), *Rahu & Ketu* appear to be rotating when observed from Earth. *Rahu* and *Ketu* do not have any physical presence, but these refer to the two points where every month Moon cuts the path of the Sun. Ancient Indians designated these as '*Navagraha*' for the sake of convenience. They also observed that the position of these nine planets keeps changing because of their movement in the ecliptic path.

A small distinction in the meaning of the words 'Planet' and 'Graha' deserves to be taken note off. A planet is defined as an astronomical body in the solar system that moves around the Sun, whereas a Graha is defined as an astronomical body in the Solar system that moves in the sky. The meaning of the word Graha in Sanskrit is 'the one that moves'. Rahu and Ketu are the points of intersection of the paths of the Sun and the Moon. Rahu is the north lunar node, and Ketu is the south lunar node. Rahu and Ketu have been classified as Chhaya Graha; meaning shadow Grahas, which are not visible. It is universally known as well as scientifically accepted that lunar and solar eclipses occur when Sun and Moon are at one of these lunar nodes. Rahu and Ketu have been included in the list of Grahas in Indian Astronomy, even though they do not have a visible physical presence in the sky, because these are used to calculate the occurrence of eclipses and these intersecting points keep moving in the sky.

Our ancestors could also observe millions of stars in the sky and noticed that several groups of stars resembling different shapes appeared fixed in the sky. These were called *Raashis,* i.e. constellations. So far, 88 such constellations have been identified. The ancients were keen to observe, record, and remember the position of moving planets of the solar system. For this, they needed a reference point in the sky, which should be by and large fixed. For this purpose, after observation done over several years, they selected 12 constellations, which formed the background of the ecliptic path and were located almost at equal distance from one another. These 12 constellations, occupying about 30 degrees each, were also called 12 zodiac signs, constellations or *Raashis* named Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpius, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius and Pisces. In ancient literature,

particularly in Mahabharat, the names of these constellations are mostly given based on the main Nakshatra falling in that constellation e.g. Ashwini, Krittika, Pushya, Magha, Chitra, Vishakha, Jyeshta, Purva Ashadha, Shravan, Dhanishtha, and Revati for all these 12 constellations. Since these 12 constellations formed the background for the ecliptic path of nine planets, it became possible to locate, record and recollect the position of nine moving planets within these 12 constellations.

Shri Pushkar Bhatnagar, in his book titled "Dating the Era of Lord Ram" has beautifully described this phenomenon by way of an Astronomical clock. He has said, "If we compare the astronomical clock of the sky with the present-day wall clock, the twelve zodiac constellations correspond to the numbers 1 to 12 written on the dial and forming the background. The moving planets would correspond to the second, minute, and hour hands of the clock. The difference is that the present-day normal clock has only three hands, but the astronomical clock *followed by ancient Indians* had nine hands." We do not know if these ancient astronomers mentioned the planetary positions with the intention of recording the time of the happening of an event or these just got recorded accidentally based on their sky observations. However, if the position of all the important planets vis-a-vis the Nakshatras (Lunar Mansions) is described in a comprehensive manner, then it can refer to one and only point of time during the last 25920 years. Modern planetarium softwares have made it possible to determine the exact date and time of such innocent astronomical observations recorded in ancient books like Vedas and Epics.

Progress in computing technologies and development of sky simulation softwares–

Rapid progress in computing technology and availability of substantial high precision data on positions of stars and solar system ephemeris have helped in the development of planetarium softwares, which can simulate the sky from given latitude and longitude and on a particular date and time in the past or future. Some of the commonly available softwares are Planetarium Gold, Stellarium and Voyager. Initially only **Planetarium Gold, version 4.1** (of Fogware Publishing) software was used to generate the sky views of sky observations recorded in Mahabharat; this software is more popular and user-friendly and makes use of Julian calendar incorporating Gregorian reforms. However, during seminars and conferences, some of the astronomers did point out that their softwares like Stellarium and Voyager do not show the respective sky views on the dates shown by Planetarium Gold software.

In order to eliminate all controversies about the astronomical dates of events narrated in Mahabharat, the corresponding sky shots using Stellarium software (version 0.15.2/2017 & 0.19.0/2019) have also been taken and reproduced, because

it is considered to be more accurate as it follows NASA JPL DE 431 Ephemeris. **Stellarium** is an open-source, free planetarium software, licensed under the terms of the GNU (General Public License version 2, available for Linux, Windows and Mac operating systems). Stellarium was created by the French programmer Fabien Chéreau, who launched the project in the summer of 2001. Currently, Stellarium is being maintained and developed by Alexander Wolf, Georg Zotti, Marcos Cardinot, Guillaume Chéreau, Bogdan Marinov, Timothy Reaves, Ferdinand Majerech and Jörg Müller.

Astronomical dates of planetary references at the time of various sequential events narrated in Mahabharat had been determined sequentially by Planetarium Gold as relating to 3153 BCE to 3101 BCE. However, Stellarium displayed the very same sky views after a gap of about 26 days (+/- 1 day) from the dates determined by Planetarium during the same year. In this book, sky shots generated using Stellarium software have been included, except for the four-five most material and exclusive sky views like that of the beginning of Uttarayan on Maagh Shukla Saptami just before Bhishma Pitamah's demise and almost all planetary positions observed before the beginning of Mahabharat war. For such exclusive as well as important references, the sky views generated using both the softwares have been included in the Book. The objective was also to explain the reasons for the difference of about 26 days approximately in the two softwares in depicting the same sky views displaying the same astronomical observations recorded by Sage Ved Vyas at the time of significant events recorded in Mahabharat. A most simple explanation is that earlier Julian calendar had a regular year of 365.25 days, divided into 12 months and a leap day was added to February once in every four years. However, actually, one year consists of 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds. This difference of 11 minutes and 14 seconds every year becomes a difference of one day in 131 years.

The Gregorian reform to Julian calendar was introduced in 1582 CE by Pope Gregory XIII of Catholic Church, Rome. Consequently, in Italy and many other countries of the world, 11 days were omitted by taking 4th October 1582, as 15th October 1582. In France also, where Stellarium Software was developed, 11 days were omitted by taking 9th December 1582, as 20th December 1582. Consequently, Planetarium Gold had taken into account the difference of 11 days, representing the difference of one day in 131 years during last 1441 years (131*11=1441). However, before 0141 CE (1582-1441= 0141), the difference of 1 day for every 131 years was not taken into account by Planetarium Gold as it had adopted this Gregorian Calendar. Stellarium, on the other hand, has taken into account this difference of one day for every 131 years for last 13200 years.

Counting from 3153 BCE to 0141 CE, there is a gap of 3294 years. That accounts for a difference of 26 days approximately. That is why Stellarium displays the same sky view after a gap of 26 days (+/-1 day). Planetarium Gold Software shows the sky view of almost all the planetary positions observed before Mahabharat war on 14th September, 3139 BCE, whereas Stellarium displays the same sky view on 10th October, 3139 BCE. Similarly, Planetarium displays the beginning of Uttarayan on Maagh Shukla Saptami on 19th December, 3139 BCE, whereas Stellarium displays the same sky view on 14th January, 3138 BCE, after 26 days. Stellarium has followed NASA JPL DE 431 Ephemeris and gives apparently more precise astronomical dates.

Both Planetarium and Stellarium softwares have revealed that the astronomical references in *Rigveda* represent the sky views of important events from around 7000 BCE to around 5500 BCE. Astronomical observations recorded by Maharishi Valmiki in Ramayan observed at the time of some significant events in the life of Shri Ram reflect sky views seen sequentially on dates around 5100 BCE. The positions of astral bodies recorded in '*Mahabharat*' could be observed sequentially in the sky around 3100 BCE. The question as to why a particular combination of planetary positions does not repeat in almost 25920 years still remains to be answered.

The reasons for non-repetition of a particular combination of astronomical positions in 25920 years –

Within the Solar system, the Sun is motionless, but it appears to be moving as Earth is revolving on its own axis and also around the Sun. However, when observed from Earth, it appears as if the Sun is moving. The phenomenon is similar to when we travel in a moving train; the standing trees appear to be moving. All the planets revolving around the Sun take different lengths of time in completing one revolution around the Sun:

1. Earth completes one revolution in one year. Actually, it takes 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds to complete one round. We shall deal with this Precession of 11 minutes 14 seconds every year or of 30° every 2160 years later on.
2. Saturn (*Shani*) completes one rotation in about 30 years (29.46 years).
3. Jupiter (*Brihaspati*) completes one revolution around the Sun in 12 years (11.86 years).
4. Mars takes around 1.88 years in completing one revolution around the Sun.

5. Venus takes about 0.615 years for completing one revolution around the Sun.
6. Mercury takes just 88 Earth days to complete one orbit around the Sun.
7. Finally consider the Sun, which appears to be completing a cycle in about 25920 years because of the precession cycle of Earth.
8. Moon is the fastest mover in the sky; it completes the round of the ecliptic in about 29.53 days, and it remains in one Nakshatra only for one day.
9. We all know that Earth revolves around the Sun and the Moon revolves around the Earth. Rahu and Ketu are the two imaginary planets which refer to the two points where every month Moon cuts the path of the Sun. That is why these two points are also connected with the solar and lunar eclipses. These intersecting points keep changing their position on the ecliptic path in a pre-determined manner.

Let us look at the natural consequences of astronomical facts stated above to understand why a combination of particular planetary positions does not repeat in 25920 years. Let us observe the sky; if Saturn is in Scorpius and Jupiter is in Virgo today, both these could come back to their respective positions only after 60 years (this being a common multiple for both 30 and 12). Now if Mars, which completes its cycle in 1.88 years, is in Taurus today, it will not come back to Taurus even in 120 or 180 years. In this manner, the duration of the time will keep on increasing. Bring in Venus and Mercury, the position will get more complicated and for these fast-moving planets to come back to the same position along with the other three slow-moving planets at the same time could take thousands of years. The moon stays in one Nakshatra only for one day and in one zodiac only for a little more than two days, making the repetition of all planetary positions in the given zodiacs at any given time almost impossible.

General Precession / the Precession Cycle –

Equinoxes move westward along the ecliptic relative to the fixed stars, at the rate of about 51 seconds of arc per year, opposite to the motion of the Sun. The Greek astronomer Hipparchus (190-120 BC) had also drawn attention to the phenomenon of the precession of equinoxes. He explained that the earth not only rotates once in a day around its axis but the axis of rotation itself precesses slowly in a conical motion in space much in the same way as a spinning top. The axis cuts a circle in the sky once nearly in 26,000 years keeping the pole of the ecliptic at its centre. This phenomenon called General Precession occurs due to the combined gravitational effect of the Sun, the Moon and other planets on the Earth. As a result, the equinoxes

move westward along the ecliptic relative to fixed stars at the rate of about 50.3 seconds of arc per year. The vernal equinox slowly regresses 360 degrees completing a full circle through the ecliptic constellations in about 26,000 years at the rate of about 1 degree every 71.6 years on an average. In India, we find various references in the ancient texts to the solstices or equinoxes occurring in the proximity of particular star or star groups, according to the prevalent convention. Since the rate of precession is known, such references can serve as important clues to determine the time of the particular epoch.

Consequently, it takes the planet earth 72 years approximately to pass through one degree of the zodiac, 960 years for precession by one Nakshatra, i.e. 13.33 degrees. In 2160 years the precession of the equinox is 30 degrees, which is equal to one constellation and in 25,920 years the full precession cycle of 360 degrees covering all 12 constellations is completed. Due to this precession cycle, Sun would appear to be moving backwards @ one Nakshatra in every 960 years and one full zodiac constellation in about 2160 years. It implies that in about 2160 years, the earth would fall back by about one zodiac constellation.

On 14th January, 3138 BCE (date displayed by Stellarium software) *i.e* the lunar date of Maagh Shukla Saptami when Northward movement of the Sun had started, the Sun was in Aquarius. The Sun would come back to the constellation Aquarius only after completing 360° of the circle in about 25920 years. It is the slowest cycle observable by naked eye and ancients were relying on such naked-eye observations. It is, thus, clear that all nine heavenly bodies referred to as Navagrahas (nine planets) by ancient Indians move at different speeds within the ecliptic, and any particular relative position of all nine bodies would not repeat in less than 25920 years.

The concept of Nakshatras and their importance in Indian astronomy –

The astronomers of ancient India identified 27 prominent and bright stars located at an equidistance of about 13.33° from one another within the 12 zodiac constellations. The Moon moves about 12.4° per day and, therefore, remains roughly closer to one of these stars every day. These 27 stars were called Lunar Mansions or Nakshatras, in which Moon stayed for approximately one day. The identification of these 27 nakshatras gave birth to the lunar calendar, and the Nakshatra near which the full Moon occurred gave the name to the month of the Lunar calendar. For example, if full Moon occurred near Nakshatra Vishakha, the month would be known as Vaishakh.

This system of Nakshatras was not unique to Indian astronomy alone. Some of these stars were identified by other ancient civilizations like Babylonian, Egyptian

or Arabian. However, the dating of astronomical observations recorded in ancient literature done by using latest planetarium softwares has conclusively proved that the people of ancient India possessed the most ancient and comprehensive knowledge of these Nakshatras and planets. Names of some of these nakshatras have been recorded in Rigveda (dated 7000 - 5500 BCE), many names of Nakshatras find mention in Ramayan (dated around 5100 BCE) and in Mahabharat (dated 3100 BCE). By around 2300 BCE, all the 27 names of Nakshatras were recorded in Atharva Veda. Therefore, the old beliefs or misnomers about Indian astronomy being influenced by Babylonian or being only 2000 years old have to be discarded in view of the latest scientific evidence.

A complete Table containing the names of 27 Nakshatras recorded by ancient Indians, along with their popular and scientific names, is given hereunder. The names of all nine planets, with their Indian and English names, have also been included in this Table.

Table of nine Planets, 27 Nakshatras / Lunar Mansions with their scientific and Arabic names, along with the names of corresponding Constellations (Raashis) and of Lunar months

No.	Sanskrit Names of Nakshatras in Roman script	Scientific names of these Lunar Mansions / Arabic Names	Corresponding Constellation names English/Indian	Indian Lunar Month in Roman script
1	**Ashwini**	13 α Aries / Hamal	Aries/Mesh	Ashwin
2	**Bharani**	41 Aries	Aries	
3	**Krittika**	25 η Tau / Al Cyone	Taurus/Vrishabh	Kartik
4	**Rohini**	87 α Tau / Aldebran	Taurus	
5	**Mrigashīrsha**	112 β Tau / Elnath	Taurus	Margshirsha
6	**Ardra**	24 γ Gem / Alhena	Gemini/Mithun	
7	**Punarvasu**	78 β Gem / Pollux	Gemini	
8	**Pushya**	17 β Cnc / Al Tarf	Cancer/Karka	Pausha
9	**Āshleshā**	47 δ Cnc / Asselus Austrlis	Cancer	
10	**Maghā**	32 α Leo / Regulus	Leo/Singh	Maagha
11	**PūrvaPhalgunī**	70 θ Leo / Chort	Leo	
12	**Uttara Phalgunī**	5 β Vir / Zavijava	Virgo/Kanya	Phalgun
13	**Hasta**	29 γ Vir / Porrima	Virgo	
14	**Chitra**	67 α Vir / Spica	Virgo	Chaitra

15	**Swāti**	99 ι Vir / Syrma	Virgo	
16	**Vishakha**	92α2Lib / Zubenelgenubi	Libra/Tula	Vaishakh
17	**Anuradha**	7 δ Sco / Dschubba	Scorpius/Vrishchik	
18	**Jyeshtha**	21 α Sco ? Antares	Scorpius	Jyeshtha
19	**Mula**	42 θ OPH /	Sagittarius/ Dhanur	
20	**Purva Ashadha**	34 δ Sgr / Nunki	Sagittarius	Ashadh
21	**Uttara Ashadha**	5 α Capr / Giedi	Capricornus/Makar	
22	**Sravana**	49 δ Capr / Deneb Algeidi	Capricornus	Shravan
23	**Dhanishta**	5 ζ 1 Aqr	Aquarius/Kumbha	
24	**Shatabhisha**	91 ϕ Aqr	Aquarius	
25	**Purva Bhadrapada**	28 ω Piscium	Pisces/Meena	Bhadrapad
26	**Uttara Bhādrapadā**	63 δ Piscium	Pisces	
27	**Revati**	ζ Piscium	Pisces	

Navagrahas are: Surya (Sun), Chandrama (Moon), Buddh (Mercury), Shukra (Venus), Mangal (Mars), Brihaspati (Jupiter), Shani (Saturn), Rahu (North Lunar Node - moon cuts the path of Sun) and Ketu (South Lunar Node)

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon gets between the Earth and the sun, and the moon casts a shadow over Earth. A solar eclipse can only take place at the phase of new moon, when the moon passes directly between the sun and Earth and its shadows fall upon Earth,›s surface.

Distrinction between planets and Navagrahas -

It is necessary to know the distinction between the meaning of planets in modern astronomical context and Navagrahas in ancient Indian Astronomy. The planet is defined as an astronomical body in the solar system that moves around the Sun. Listed in ascending order of their distance from Sun, there are eight planets, namely, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune. However, Graha is defined as an astronomical body, which moves in the sky, but that movement may not be always around the Sun. Moreover, Graha is the one which is visible to the naked eye in the sky, except for Rahu and Ketu, which are described as Chhaya Graha. Based on these two criteria, Sun, Earth, Uranus, and Neptune are not Grahas, but Sun and Moon are Grahas, along with Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Rahu and Ketu are two Shadow Grahas, which are the points of intersection of the paths of the Sun and the Moon as they travel in the sky. More precisely, twice every month, the Moon cuts the path of the earth moving around

the Sun, these intersecting points are called Rahu and Ketu. Rahu is the north lunar node whereas Ketu is the south lunar node. Their positions have been used in Indian astronomy to calculate the date and time of occurrence of eclipses; they used these calculations to predict the occurrence of eclipses over hundreds of years.

In addition to the 12 Constellations visible around the ecliptic, identified with 27 Nakshatras, the ancients had also observed some other Constellations and Asterisms. An Asterism is a popular grouping of stars easily recognized by the casual observer. Asterisms may be part of a recognized constellation but are not constellations themselves. The Saptarshis or the Big Dipper is one of the most well-known and easily spotted collection of stars in the Northern Hemisphere, and although it is often mistaken to be a constellation, it is merely an asterism. It consists of seven bright stars and is part of the constellation Ursa Major or Great Bear.

Luni-solar calendar followed in ancient India and the concept of Intercalary month –

The ancient Indian astronomers followed the Luni-solar calendar. A lunar year consists of 354 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3 seconds, whereas a solar year is of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. Thus, there is a difference of 10 days, 17 hours, 4 minutes and 43 seconds. Consequently, after about 32.5 months, a lunar year falls behind a solar year by about one month. To facilitate reconciliation, the practice of intercalary month (*adhik maas*) after about 32.5 months, was being followed by the ancients. This practice is continuing till date. While working out the solar dates using the two softwares, the corresponding lunar date mentioned in Mahabharat has also been verified by comparing the phase of the Moon and the nearest Nakshatra.

The description of Solar and Lunar eclipses in ancient Indian astronomy –

More than 7000 years back, at the time of the composition of Rigveda, the Indians knew that the earth revolves around its father-like Sun, whereas Moon revolves around its mother-like earth (Rig/10/189/1 & Yajur 3/6). As a result, every month, the Moon would cut the path of the Sun at two points. In Surya Siddhanta, which is more than 2000 years old treatise on Indian astronomy, the causes of occurrences of solar and lunar eclipses have been explained with precision. The path that the Sun takes as it moves around the celestial sphere is called the ecliptic. The ***ecliptic*** is an imaginary line in the sky that marks the annual ***path*** of the sun. It is the projection of Earth's orbit onto the celestial sphere. The path of the Moon, as it moves around the celestial sphere, is sometimes a little north of the ecliptic, and sometimes slightly south of the ecliptic. This is also described as the oscillation of

the Moon. The point at which the Moon crosses the ecliptic moving north is called the ascending node (Rahu), and the point at which the Moon crosses the ecliptic moving south is called the descending node (Ketu). The ascending and descending nodes are treated by the Hindu astronomers as though they are celestial bodies. They are given names, Rahu and Ketu. Their positions, accurate longitudes and distance *etc.* are calculated by the same algorithms, which calculate the positions of the other planetary bodies.

Surya Siddhanta has described, giving precise details, that a solar eclipse can occur only on a No-Moon day and that also when Sun and Moon are both close to the nodes of the orbit of the Moon. This treatise also explains that a lunar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes directly behind the Earth into its shadow. This can occur only when the Sun, Earth, and the Moon are aligned exactly or very closely so, with earth between the other two. A lunar eclipse can occur only on the night of a full moon. During a total lunar eclipse, Earth completely blocks direct sunlight from reaching the Moon. Verification made by generating sky views, using Stellarium software, has proved that the eclipses mentioned by Krishna Dvaipayan Vyas in Mahabharat fully and completely fulfil these criteria.

Justification for the display of two Solar Eclipses at night time by Stellarium software-

Readers may ask a very pertinent question: why the two solar eclipses, referred to in Chapter 29 (Astronomical dates of planetary positions observed before the commencement of the war) of this Book, are being depicted during night time when Sun is not even above the horizon. They may also ask why the lunar eclipse mentioned therein is displayed during day time. NASA has provided a very convincing answer to these questions. Reference may be made to https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEhelp/uncertainty2004.html. NASA Eclipse Sky guide has given a chart of uncertainties in Delta T i.e. ΔT, clearly stating that there are bound to be inaccuracies in depicting the timings and longitudes of eclipse paths, both for solar and lunar eclipses, which occurred before 1600 CE. Based on the chart prepared by Morrison and Stephenson, a series of parabolic expressions have been derived, estimating uncertainties of time or in the longitudes of eclipse paths which occurred during the interval 2000 BCE to 1000 CE (4000 BP to 1000 BP).

Table 3 - Uncertainty of ΔT (estimated)		
Year	**σ (seconds)**	**Longitude**
-4000	16291	67.9°
-3500	12378	51.6°
-3000	8978	37.4°
-2500	6094	25.4°
-2000	3732	15.6°
-1500	1900	7.9°
-1000	622	2.6°

Thus, an eclipse which occurred more than 4000 years back, the software could depict the same up to time difference of 16291 seconds i.e. 11: 31 hrs. Thus solar eclipses referred to in Mahabharat included in this Book, which Stellarium software is depicting during night time, might have actually been observed during the day time. Similarly, the lunar eclipse mentioned therein might have been observed during night time. DeltaT is the difference between Terrestrial Time and Universal Time (Rotational time), which have been adopted as fixed as per certain norms. However, actually, the Universal time can vary on several occasions due to several factors like earthquakes, high tides, volcanic eruptions etc.

SAO/NASA Astrophysics Data System has also recorded the observations that Moon displays oscillations from two unknown sources, one within a period between 250-300 years with a co-efficient of 15" to 20" and the other within a period between 60 to 70 years with a co-efficient of some 3". These and many other factors, like the mean latitude of the Moon may not be zero, might lead to differences in observations of eclipses recorded thousands of years back and theoretical recordings based on fixed and pre-determined parameters. Therefore, it is possible that the Solar eclipses, on 15th December, 3153 BCE, and on 11th October, 3139 BCE, were actually observed during day time and lunar eclipse on 26th September, 3139 BCE, was in reality observed during night time, but Stellarium software displays the two solar eclipses during night time and one lunar eclipse during day time.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is clarified that astronomical dating is a work neither of guesswork nor of approximation. Either all the planetary positions recorded match sequentially, or they do not. If they match exactly and sequentially then the year, month, date along with identified period of two hours have to match as after two hours one zodiac constellation would go below the horizon and another constellation will rise from the East. That is why one is able to say with full confidence that the astronomical date sequence of Mahabharat events determined in this Book is the only real, verifiable, and correct date sequence of events narrated in Mahabharat. An additional effort was also made to generate the sky views of astronomical references of Mahabharat using Stellarium as well as Planetarium software. Except for the calendrical difference of 26 days (+/- 1 day), the sky views of astronomical references, along with their lunar dates, generated by these two softwares exactly match the descriptions in Mahabharat. Therefore, it is felt that this book sets at rest all controversies about the astronomical dating of the Mahabharat War. Events narrated in Mahabharat are real, and they occurred sequentially around 3100 BCE, fully supported by the sky simulations of the astronomical observations recorded by Maharshi Vyas in Mahabharat.

APPENDIX 2

Critical analysis of Astronomical dates of Mahabharat determined by other scientists and scholars

From Pargiter to Bhatnagar, more than 150 scholars and scientists have made attempts at the dating of Mahabharat war. Some dates are determined based on genealogy charts, others on archaeological evidence but most of these have adopted the route of astronomical dating. The range of dates of war, determined by these scholars and scientists, ranges from 6228 BCE to 575 BCE. More than 40% of the scholars have put the date of war somewhere during 3000-3200 BCE. People of India have traditionally and widely believed that the war took place in 3139 BCE, 37 years before the beginning of the Kali era in 3102 BCE. An attempt was made to understand and evaluate the dates determinned by most of these scholars and scientists

Since this book, gives topmost priority to astronomical dating, so a more concentrated study was made of attempts at astronomical dating of Mahabharat war. These were divided into two categories; those which were based on manual calculations and the ones which make use of planetarium softwares. Many such attempts based on manual calculations were not considered serious, because these did not give any reliable date of war on account of insufficient coverage of events and references included in the Mahabharat. Many other such attempts were ignored as these have not taken into account complicated astronomical principles

like the precession of Equinoxes, which impact the precise calculation of dates of any planetary references or have adopted vague/erroneous interpretation of some selected verses. A large number of them have arrived at the dates of Mahabharat war by making a random selection of some events, ignoring the detailed sequence of events narrated in Mahabharat verses.

On account of such reasons, most of the attempts made at astronomical dating of Mahabharat war have been ignored. However, some detailed ones, made by using planetarium software, and reported in reputed journals, have been examined in-depth, analysed and evaluated in this chapter. These include – determination of the date of Mahabharat war in 1478 BCE by Dr Iyengar (2003), in 3067 BCE by Shri Narahari Achar (2003), and 1792 BCE by Shri Bhatnagar. Shri Nilesh Oak also attempted; he placed the date somewhere around 5561 BCE, or before that. The main criteria for evaluating their accuracy is their internal consistency with the sequence of events narrated in Mahabharat and precision with which the sky shots match the planetary positions described in Mahabharat.

Mahabharat contains more than one lakh verses; out of which more than 200 verses refer to the sequential astronomical positions. Usually, none of these eminent scientists made any effort to read the whole of Mahabharat text; they determined the dates of its astronomical references only after reading some limited parts of the text. They devised various short-cut methods like verification of triplet of eclipses or double eclipses from NASA trajectory; as a result of which Mahabharat war dates determined by them became internally inconsistent with the Mahabharat text. The eclipses which were observed in the Kartik month as per Mahabharat text, were depicted in the months of Jyeshta or Ashadh by some of them.

Identifying such inconsistencies and then removing these was a big challenge. However, it was met by constituting a team of three people, in which the author associated a Sanskrit scholar for ensuring accurate and precise translations of Mahabharat verses, and an amateur astronomer proficient in operating planetarium softwares. We worked for almost three years; six days a week and 6-8 hours a day, and, thus, invested more than, 5000 working hours in carrying out more precise astronomical dating –

- More than one lakh verses contained in Mahabharat (nine volumes of Parimal Publications & six volumes of Gita press, Gorakhpur) were studied, and astronomical references were sequentially extracted. Generally, those, which were also found in Critical Edition, were identified for sequential astronomical dating. Some translations of relevant verses were re-done with the help of Sanskrit scholars and after referring to Sanskrit-English and Sanskrit-Hindi dictionaries as some of

the traditional translations were found to be not very precise and appropriate.

- Astronomical references from Sabha Parva, Vana Parva, Udyog Parva, Bhishma Parva, Shalya Parva, Shanti Parva, Anushasana Parva, Ashwamedhika Parva and Mausal Parva have been dated sequentially by making use of planetarium software (Planetarium Gold version 4.1 of Fogware). All these were after that verified on Stellarium software (version 0.15.2/2017 & 0.19.1/2019; NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris), which displays all these sequential sky views after around 26 dates (+/- I day). This difference is due to-non-adjustment of 1 day for 131 years for pre-Gregorian reform period (3294 ÷131) by Planetarium software.
- The internal consistency of astronomical dates with the sequential text of Mahabharat was ensured. Astronomical dates calculated by almost all the scholars during the last 130 years were analyzed, with full respect to their scholarship. Genuine efforts were made to provide the missing links so as to align their dates with Mahabharat references. A comprehensive review was done of astronomical dating done by these four scholars named Shri Narahari Achar, Shri Iyengar, Shri Ashok Bhatnagar, and Shri Nilesh Oak. The results are discussed hereunder.

Let it be added with all the humility that all four of them are erudite and renowned astronomers. In contrast, the author of this book claims no knowledge of astronomy and have only learnt its basics to operate the softwares - Planetarium and Stellarium and then compare the sky simulations minutely with the recorded astronomical positions in the verses of Mahabharat. It is the sequential reading of the entire Mahabharat text that has enabled the author to gather the courage to evaluate the papers of these great scientists and scholars critically.

Critical Appraisal of Shri Narahari Achar's Paper entitled "A Critical Examination of the Astronomical References in Mahabharat and their simulation by Planetarium Software."

Shri Achar has assigned the date 22nd November, 3067 BCE, for the beginning of Mahabharat war because, at that time, Saturn was in conjunction with Rohini (Aldebaran), Mars was in retrograde motion near Jyeshta (Antares). Besides; a lunar eclipse on Kartika Purnima, i.e. on 29.9.3067 BCE, followed by a solar eclipse at Jyeshta, was observable before the beginning of the war. The summary of his entire thesis is given below –

"A search was made using the planetarium software SkyMap Pro6, from 3500 BCE to 1000 BCE, for the years in which Saturn was in conjunction with Aldebaran.

There are 85 such conjunctions in this interval. Then, a search was made from among these 85 conjunction years to find the years in which Mars executed a retrograde motion near Antares. This reduced the set to just eight: 3067 BCE, 2625 BCE, 2420 BCE, 2183 BCE, 1946 BCE, 1741 BCE, 1299 BCE and 1094 BCE, when Saturn was near Aldebaran and Mars executed a retrograde motion before reaching Antares.

There was also a solar eclipse at Antares. The planetarium software RedShift 3 was used for searching for those years with a solar eclipse at Antares from among these eight dates. This resulted in just two years 3067 BCE and 2183 BCE as the candidates for the events in the epic. If in addition, one uses the fact that Bhishma Pitamah died soon after the arrival of Winter solstice on Shukla Ashtami in Rohini Nakshatra (first quarter moon after the arrival of the winter solstice was near Aldeberan) only 3067 BCE satisfies this and not 2183 BCE.

The year 3067 BCE, had been proposed earlier by Shri Raghavan, as a possible year for the war, and Dr Achar has confirmed his conclusions. He had given a chronology of events in the epic; some important astronomical dates are given in the table below, which are illustrated by the simulations presented by Dr Achar using the planetarium software SkyMap Pro6.

	Event	Date
1	Krishna's departure for Hastinapura	September 26, 3067 BCE
2	Lunar Eclipse at Krittika	September 29, 3067 BCE
3	Krishna rides with Karna	October 8, 3067 BCE
4	Solar Eclipse at Jyeshta	October 14, 3067 BCE
5	Beginning of war	November 22, 3067 BCE
6	Winter Solstice	January 13, 3066 BCE
5	Bhishma's expiry	January 17, 3066 BCE

1. Inaccuracies and contradictions noted in the dating done by Dr Achar –

1.1. In the sky simulations included by Shri Achar in his Paper, one is unable to spot any lunar eclipse on 29th September, 3067 BCE from Kurukshetra or Hastinapur; apparently, no such eclipse on that date is displayed by the Planetarium Gold software. For alleged solar eclipse on 14th October 3067 BCE, neither the time of observation nor the relevant geo-coordinates have been mentioned by him. The Sky simulation included by him in his paper

does not display any visible solar eclipse. We all know that a solar eclipse is observable from a place for not more than 2-3 hours. Was it observable from Hastinapur/Delhi; if yes, at what time?

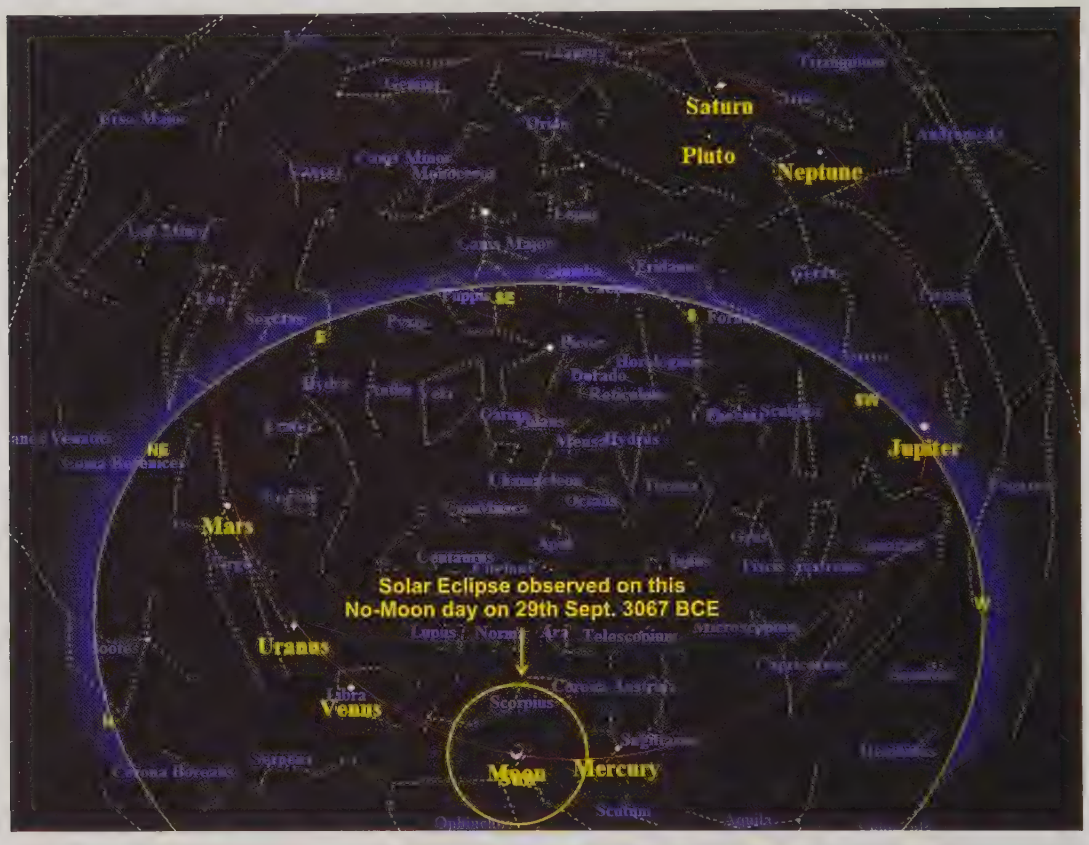
1.2. Since Shri Narahari Achar has referred to the Gregorian calendar, an attempt was made to verify the sky views on dates identified by him by using Planetarium Gold (version 4.1, by Fogware) software, which follows the Gregorian calendar. It was observed that the software displays the sky simulations in reverse order that is solar eclipse precedes the lunar eclipse.

1.3. 29th September, 3067 BCE, was not a Full moon day but was actually a No-Moon day; therefore, it was not possible to have any lunar eclipse on that date. See the sky simulation at 6 AM on that date depicting clear Amavasya (No-Moon) day. The sky simulation depicts on this very date a solar eclipse at 23.15 hours. Both the sky simulations are shown hereunder -

29th September, 3067 BCE, was a No-Moon day as is clear from the sky simulation at 6 AM on September, 29, 3067 BCE, from Hastinapur; 29°N 78°E, Planetarium

There was not any lunar eclipse on 29th September, 3067 BCE. Instead a solar eclipse could be observed at 23.15 hours on 29th September, 3067 BCE, which was a

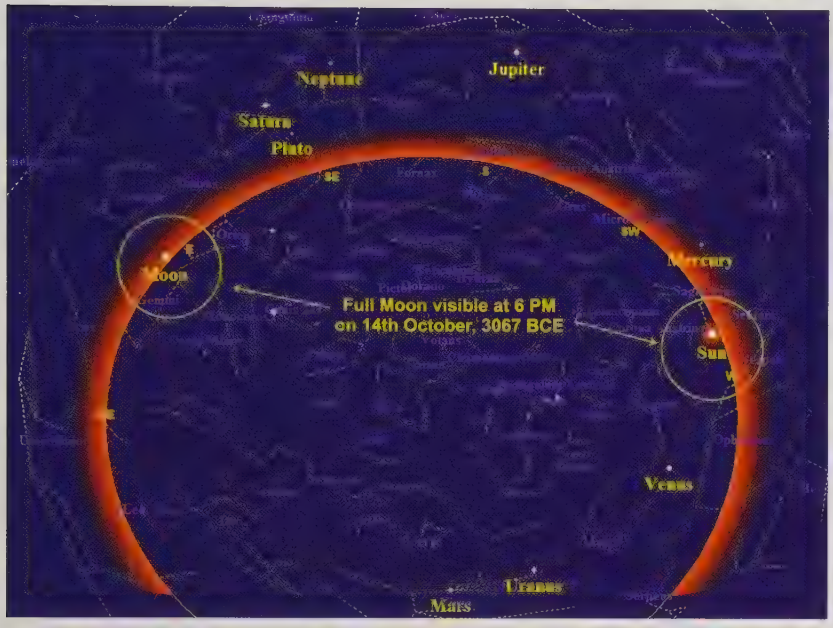
no-moon day. This sky simulation is reproduced hereunder.



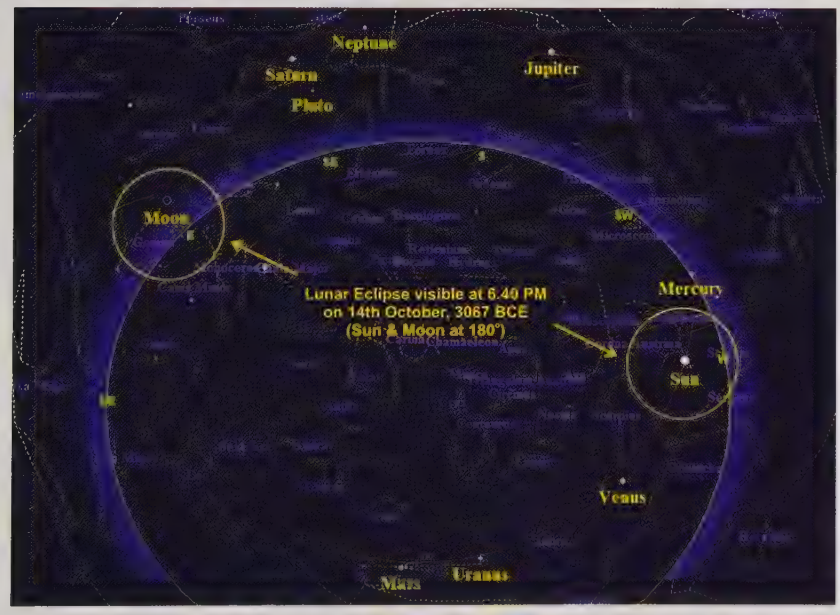
29th September, 3067 BCE, was a No-Moon day; a solar eclipse could be observed at 23.15 hours on Sep. 29, 3067 BCE, from Hastinapur; 29°N 78°E, Planetarium

Thus, there was a solar eclipse on Sep. 29, 3067 BCE, at 23.15, observable from Hastinapur; obviously there could not have been any lunar eclipse.

1.4. Again for the sky view dated 14th October, 3067 BCE, the sky simulation revealed that it was not an Amavasya (no moon) day, instead, it was Purnima, i.e. a full moon day. Therefore, it was not possible to have any solar eclipse on that date. The Sky shot depicts the full Moon at 18.00 hours on 14th October, 3067 BCE, but by 18.40 hours, there was a lunar eclipse observable from Hastinapur. See both the sky simulations –



14th October, 3067 BCE, was a full Moon day as was observable at 18.00 hours from Hastinapur; 29°N 78°E, Planetarium



14th October, 3067 BCE, was a full moon day, and a total lunar eclipse was observable from Hastinapur 29°N 78°E, at 18.40 hours, when Sun and Moon were located precisely at 180° distance

1.5. Thus on 29th September, 3067 BCE, no lunar eclipse was seen from Hastinapur/ Delhi; instead, a solar eclipse was observed. Again on 14th October, 3067 BCE, no solar eclipse was observed; instead, a lunar eclipse was seen. However, these eclipses were not observed in month of Kartika but in Margashirsha and Paush. As per Mahabharat text (6/2/23 and 6/3/32 or 6/3/28-29 in Ganguli), the lunar eclipse had been followed by Solar eclipse in the month of Kartik before the Mahabharat war, and it was not the other way round. Therefore, neither the sequence of eclipses presented by Dr Achar nor their timings have any consistency with the Mahabharat script. In his article dated January 2003, Dr Achar tried to avoid this controversy saying that for astronomical dating of Mahabharat references, "one must really consider an eclipse season with three eclipses, with two lunar eclipses bordering a solar eclipse."

1.6. Dr Achar has explained that in an eclipse season, an eclipse can occur when the Sun is near a node of the Moon's orbit (i.e. Rahu or Ketu). The Sun usually remains in that position for one month, and eclipses can occur when there is full Moon or No-moon during that period. If the conditions are right, even three eclipses can occur in an eclipse season. Dr Achar holds the view that there was such a situation before the war. He has elaborated saying that there was a lunar eclipse on 29th September, 3067 BCE, at Kartika full Moon, followed by a solar eclipse on 14th October, the month of Margashirsha and a third lunar eclipse on 28th October, 3067 BCE, in the month of Margashirsha. Dr Achar is, therefore, of the opinion that Sage Vyas was referring to the last pair of eclipses. Conclusions arrived at by Dr Narahari Achar are not supported by the sky simulations generated using Planetarium software which uses a Gregorian calendar, as has been used by the software used by Dr Achar. There was not any lunar eclipse on 28th October, 3067 BCE, but a near Solar eclipse could be observed on 29th October, 3067 BCE, at 6.30 AM.

Such mismatches and discrepancies had happened probably because a shortcut method of tracing the pairs of eclipses from NASA data was used. No serious attempt appears to have been made to sequentially match the sky simulations with the sequential astronomical references in Mahabharat, after ensuring more appropriate translations. Moreover, Dr Achar determined the astronomical dates by placing reliance on very few references of Udyog Parva and Bhishma Parva. He dismissed some of the most relevant planetary references in Bhishma Parva (6/3/14 to 6/3/18) as possible references to comets. Consequently, the conclusions arrived at are neither internally consistent nor sequentially matching with the story of Mahabharat –

- Dr Achar had first identified 85 intervals from 3500 BCE to 1000 BCE when Saturn was in conjunction with Aldeberan (by relying on 6/2/32, which is not very relevant for astronomical dating).
- Out of these 85 conjunctions, he identified eight occasions when Mars executed a retrograde motion near Antares: 3067 BCE, 2625 BCE, 2420 BCE, 2183 BCE, 1946 BCE, 1741 BCE, 1299 BCE and 1094 BCE.
- Then he identified that out of these; there was a solar eclipse at Antares (Jyeshta, i.e. Scorpius) only in 3067 BCE and 2183 BCE.
- Then he rules out 2183 by giving a strange logic that 92 days after the beginning of the war, Uttarayan had begun on 13th January, 3066 BCE, which did not happen in 2183. Thus, he decided 3067 as the date of the war.

2. Scientific verification has revealed that all these four presumptions are not very reliable as these are based on the inaccurate translation of original verses –

2.1. Firstly, Mahabharat has not referred to any conjunction of Saturn with Aldebaran (Rohini) at the time of the beginning of the war; further conjunction is not the same thing as an affliction; verse VI.2.32 talks of the affliction of Rohini by Saturn. An affliction could be caused from the same house or from 3rd, 7th house, or 10th house. Dr Achar shortlisted only those dates when Saturn was in Rohini and ignored those when it was just opposite in 7th house and also did not adopt any date sequence for the purpose.

2.2. Secondly, Shri Achar presumed that Mars was in retrograde motion in Antares whereas, Mahabharat verse could also be interpreted to mean that it was in retrograde motion, comfortably located in its own house, which is Aries. (VI.3.14)

2.3. Thirdly, Mahabharat does not say that solar eclipse was in Antares (Scorpius), but it says that, as suggested by Lord Krishna, the war started on Amavasya day of *Margshirsh* month when Amavasya Moon was near Jyeshta in Scorpius (5/142/17-18). This happened on 13th October, 3139 BCE. As per Planetarium Gold software; war had begun on Amavasya when no-moon was in Jyeshta (i.e. Antares) in the month of Margashirsha. As per Mahabharat text, by that time, Lunar and Solar eclipses had already taken place in the month of Kartika.

2.4. Fourthly, Bhishma Pitamah left for his heavenly abode on Maagh (Shukla Ashtami on the 68th day after the beginning of the war. Therefore, Uttarayan should have begun on/around 67th day after the war started and not after 92

days as has been presumed by Shri Achar. Since the war began on 13th October, 3139 BCE; 67th day was on 19th December, 3139 BCE. Uttarayan started precisely on this day, i.e. 19th December, 3139 BCE, which was also Maagh Shukla Saptami day (13/167/26-28) as per Planetarium. Bhishma Pitamah's demise was on 20th December, 3139 BCE, precisely on the 68th day of the beginning of the war, as has been narrated in Mahabharat. Maagh Shukla Ashtami is till date celebrated by the people of India as Bhishma Ashtami.

2.5. Then, we also need to take note of the fact that Shri Krishna had left for his last peace mission in the month of Kartika in Revati Nakshatra, which was obviously after the occurrence of two eclipses in the month of Kartika itself, as had been described by Sage Vyas who was making last-ditch effort to prevent war. 25th September, 3139 BCE, matches this position but not 28th September, 3067 BCE.

2.6. After the decision to fight the war was taken, Balaram, to remain neutral, left for pilgrimage in Pushya Nakshatra and returned on 42nd day in Shravan Nakshatra. This condition is also not satisfied by Shri Achar's calculations.

2.7. Given below is a table containing a list of Planets 'aspecting' / 'afflicting' other houses (*Rasis*) in common astrological usage, since ancient times.

Object	Aspects House /Raashi /constellation
Sun	7th from its position
Moon	7 th -do-
Venus	7 th -do-
Mars	4 th , 7 th , 8th -do-
Jupiter	3 rd , 7 th , 9 th, -do-
Saturn	3 rd , 7 th ,10 th - do-

Dr Achar has dismissed the most important verses of chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva as references to some kinds of comets by arbitrarily prefixing 'son of' before every planet and not explaining how 12 types of comets could be seen at the same time! The relevant verses containing sequential astronomical references are reproduced below with more accurate translations done by Sanskrit scholars, that also by making use of dictionaries which provide more appropriate meaning to some of these verses -

Senayor aśivaṃ ghoraṃ kariṣyati mahāgrahaḥ
Maaghāsv aṅgārako vakraḥ śravaṇe ca bṛhaspatiḥ // MB(VI. 3. 13)

The meaning assigned by Dr Achar - The mahagraha appears to bring about awful destruction in both armies. [Son of] Mars is retrograde in Maagha, and [son of] Jupiter in Shravana."

(**More appropriate meaning would be** - The great planet will cause terrible destruction in both the armies. M*angal* (Mars) is comfortable (i.e. Maagh) entering its own house, i.e. (sva) *Mesha* (Aries) in *Vakra-gati,* i.e. in backward motion (it was in Taurus before 13th Sept. 3139 BCE, and then moved back to Aries). *Brihaspati (Jupiter)* is in *Shravan Nakshatra* (in Capricornus) – all these positions are seen on 14th September, 3139 BCE – Planetarium sky view).

Bhāgyaṃ° nakṣatram ākramya sūryaputreṇa pīḍyate
śukraḥ proṣṭhapade pūrve samāruhya viśāṃ pate
Uttare tu parikramya sahitaḥ pratyudīkṣate // MB (VI. 3. 14)

(°bhagam in other MB texts)

The meaning assigned by Dr Achar - The son of Surya has crossed the asterism Purva-Phalguni and is vexing. Oh King, [son of] Shukra has entered Purva-Bhadrapada, going around Uttara-Bhadrapada and is rising in both."

(**More precise meaning** - Sun's offspring Shani (Saturn) *is in Scorpius and is thus* aspecting Bhagham, i.e. Uttar Phalguni (in Leo) which is 10th constellation from Scorpius and is therefore in full aspect of Saturn. Shining brilliantly, the planet Shukra (Venus) is aspecting Poorva Bhadrapada & after that Uttara Bhadrapada, both in Pisces. (On 14th Sep, 3139 BCE, Venus is positioned between Chitra and Swati (in Kanya, i.e. Virgo) and is thus aspecting seventh constellation from its location, i.e. Meena Rashi /Pisces).

Śyāmo° grahaḥ prajvalitaḥ sa dhūmaḥ saha pāvakaḥ
aindraṃ tejasvi nakṣatraṃ jyeṣṭhām ākramya tiṣṭhati// MB(VI. 3. 15)

(°shweto in most of the other texts)

The meaning assigned by Dr Achar - Syamograha is luminous, and together with Dhuma and Pavaka, has crossed over to Jyeshta, the bright asterism ruled by Indra.

(**More appropriate meaning** – In most of the texts word used is 'Shweto' and not Syamo. Therefore, the meaning should be - Shweto graham, i.e. Mercury is blazing like smoky fire; it stops and afflicts the effulgent constellation ruled by Indra, i.e. Jyeshta (in Scorpius). On 14th September, 3139 BCE, Mercury is in Scorpius)

Dhruvaḥ prajvalito ghoram apasavyaṃ pravartate
citrā svāty antare caiva dhiṣṭhitaḥ paruṣo grahaḥ// MB (VI.3.16)

The meaning assigned by Dr Achar - The luminous Dhruva has moved to the right of ghora. The Parusha Graha has established itself between Chitra and Swati."

(**More appropriate meaning** – The constellation Dhruva, fearfully blazing, advances towards the right of Ghora. Parush Graha, i.e. Shukra (Venus) is located between Chitra & Swati Nakshatras and is, thus, situated in Kanya (Virgo Constellation) – All these positions get depicted in 14th Sept., 3139 BCE Skyview)

Vakrānuvakraṃ kṛtvā ca śravaṇe pāvakaprabhaḥ
brahmarāśiṃ samāvṛtya lohitāṅgo vyavasthitaḥ // MB(VI. 3. 17)

The meaning assigned by Dr Achar - Pavakaprabha has gone circumventing Shravana, and Lohitanga has become steady after enclosing Brahmarashi."

(**More appropriate meaning** – Pavakprabha, i.e. *Brihaspati* (Jupiter) is going around *Shravan Nakshatra in* Brahmaraashi, i.e. in Makar (Capricornus) Rashi, which is also described as a mass of knowledge. *Lohitang, i.e. Mangal* (Mars) in backwards-forward motion is looking stable/static in its own house, i.e. Aries. All these positions are clearly observable in the sky view on 14th September, 3139 BCE, as per planetarium, a few hours before the solar eclipse, which was observed a few days before the war started.

Dr Achar dismissed all the references contained in verses 6/3/13-18 as some kind of references to comets.

3. Chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva, ignored by Dr Achar, contains almost complete sequential dating of Mahabharat –

3.1. There is need to take note of the fact that from verses VI.2.23 to VI.3.32 in Mahabharat, there is a complete description of the sequential sky observations starting with the lunar eclipse in Kartika Month *on first Purnima* (VI/2/23), and ending with a near solar eclipse during the same month of Kartika on Amavasya day (VI/3/29). The Lunar eclipse could be observed on 31st August, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium, on first Purnima of Kartik month as there used to be Purnimanta month. Most important is that all the planetary positions covering almost all seven Grahas (planets) and 14 constellations referred to in Mahabharat verses (VI.3.13-18) could be clearly observed in the sky a few hours before the solar eclipse on 14th September, 3139 BCE on Kartika Amavasya as per Planetarium.

3.2. It is further added, that this Skyview clinches all disputes about the dating of Mahabharat war because all these planetary positions together have not been observed on any other date during the last 25920 years. In any case, these were not observed anytime around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or 1478

BCE, which are the dates determined by the other scholars. Planetarium sky simulation depicting all these astronomical positions on 14th September, 3139 BCE, is given hereunder.

This sky simulation, displays all the above stated planetary positions, described in chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva (Vi/3/13-18), with total precision and clarity on 14th September, 3139 BCE. M*angal* (Mars) was entering its own house, i.e. *Mesha* (Aries) in backwards-forward motion; *Jupiter* was in *Shravan Nakshatra* (in Capricornus). Shani (Saturn) was in Scorpius and was thus aspecting *Uttar Phalguni* (in Leo) which is 10th constellation from Scorpius. The planet Shukra (Venus) was aspecting *Poorva Bhadrapada* & Uttara Bhadrapada, in Pisces. Both Ketu and Mercury were afflicting Jyeshta in Scorpius on 10th October, 3139 BCE. Both Sun and Moon were located in Scorpius; afflicting Rohini. Shukra (Venus) was situated between Chitra & Swati Asterisms, i.e. between Virgo and Libra.

Planetary positions as seen in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE (18:20 hrs.), from Hastinapur (29°N, 77°E) - Planetarium

3.3. After that, there occurred near solar eclipse in Kartika Month on 14th September, 3139 BCE. Shri Achar has correctly observed that one may not be able to calculate the occurrence of a solar eclipse within an accuracy of several hours for several reasons. Shri Krishna came on his last Peace Mission in Revati Nakshatra in Kartika month on 25th September, 3139 BCE. The mission failed, and Balaram left in Pushya Nakshatra (in Margashirsha month) on 3rd October, 3139 BCE. The war started in the middle of Margashirsha month when Amavasya moon was in Jyeshta Nakshatra on 13th October, 3139 BCE.

3.4. Going ahead, the beginning of Uttarayan on Maagh Shukla Saptami on 19th December, 3139 BCE *(refer - Anushasana Parva, (13/167/26-28),* precisely 67 days after the beginning of the war on 13th October, 3139 BCE, has also not been observed around any other dates, listed above by Dr Achar. However, Dr Achar has not displayed through astronomical calculations that the Uttarayan in the month on Maagh had begun 67 days after the date of the war, which as per him had begun on 13th January, 3066 BCE i.e 92 days after the war beginning. In the text of Mahabharat it is unambiguously mentioned that the Sun started its northward journey and Bhishma left for Mahaprayan 58 days after his fall in the battle and 68 days after the war beginning (13/67/27,28). Sky simulations have revealed that on 19th December, 3139 BCE, was the beginning of the northward movement of the Sun on Maagh Shukla Saptami day, which was exactly 67 days after the war beginning and Bhishma left for his heavenly abode on 68th day, i.e 20th December, 3139 BCE. This sky simulation does not get repeated in / around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE. This sky view is an essential marker for determining the exact dates of the Mahabharat war.

For these reasons, the date of war beginning on 22nd November, 3067 BCE, determined by Shri Achar, is not internally consistent with references in the Mahabharat. The skyviews relied upon by him do not match the planetary positions described in Mahabharat. Therefore, this date cannot be accepted as accurate and convincing. However, we are grateful to Shri N Achar for suggesting to us the timeline around which we should look for the dates of the Mahabharat war. Jyeshta Amavasya in Margashirsha month, which is on 13th October, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium software (Gregorian calendar) and 8th November, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium software (0.19.1 version, NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris) appears to be the most accurate date for the beginning of Mahabharat war. There is a lunar eclipse on first Kartika Purnima in 3139 BCE on 31st August, followed by a near solar eclipse on Kartika Amavasya in 3139 BCE on 14th September. As admitted by Shri Achar himself, there are many uncertainties in the sighting of thousands of years' old eclipses; therefore, as compared to the eclipses, the planetary positions are of

greater importance. However, these detailed positions have to be matched precisely with the sky simulations, to arrive at the exact astronomical dates of events recorded in ancient literature like Mahabharat.

The correct date sequence of Mahabharat events can only be determined by taking into account the planetary references spanning more than 52 years, contained in Sabha Parva, Vana Parva, Udyog Parva, Bhishma Parva, Shalya Parva, Shanti Parva, Anushasan Parva, Ashwamedhika Parva, and Mausal Parva. Shri Achar had not attempted to display the solar eclipse from Dwarka 36-37 years after the war nor has he showed the Kali-era conjunction, which was seen when Pandava brothers left for Swargarohan after crowning Parikshit as the king. With the Mahabharat war in 3067 BCE, all these would go topsy-turvy as Dwarka would have submerged and Kali era conjunction would have been observed before the beginning of the war, proving the age-old beliefs as untrue. A chart giving the astronomical and historical dates of events narrated in Mahabharat, with war having taken place in 3139 BCE, has been included in Appendix 3 of this book; all the sky simulations included therein match the descriptions in Mahabharat.

Almost all the corresponding sky views generated using Planetarium as well as Stellarium softwares, along with all the relevant references and explanations had also been included in the Paper titled "Mahabharat Retold with Scientific Evidence" uploaded on sarojbala.blogspot.in. The final version of this paper was uploaded on http://sarojbala.blogspot.com/2017/ in April 2017, after dealing with critical comments and suggestions conveyed by the scientists and scholars, including Dr Achar. After April 2017, not even a single criticism has been received against this article. The paper was also published in Dialogue, Volume 18, and in '**Science and Spirituality in Vedic Tradition', a WAVES India publication of 2018. No criticisms whatsoever were received after that; instead, the author got some compliments from some eminent scholars.** For this reason, also the astronomical date sequence of Mahabharat references given in this book is considered to be more credible and convincing.

Critical Evaluation of Dr Ashok K. Bhatnagar's paper entitled: "Date of Mahabharat War Based on Astronomical References: A Reassessment" Published in Indian Journal of History of Science (2017)

Dr Ashok Bhatnagar is an erudite and renowned astronomer, who did his post-graduation in astronomy more than 50 years back. The author had the good fortune of interacting with him for a few years and developed a great respect for his profound knowledge of astronomy. The problem is not so much with Shri

Bhatnagar's astronomical calculations, but it is with their consistency with the sequential references of Mahabharat.

Dr Bhatnagar has followed a methodology, as per which he extracted verses from Mahabharat, which contain references to the seasons and then he worked further to determine their time. He has based his entire paper on the interpretation of seasons, and he has autocratically reduced the duration of the autumn season only to one month of Kartika, whereas, standard duration of the season should be two months. As a result, a substantial number of days from Ashwin and Margashirsha months, along with the month of Kartika would get included in the autumn season. On the other hand, some scholars and references assign three months to a season. After assuming that around 1792 BCE autumn season was only in one month of Kartika, Dr Bhatnagar has worked out the corresponding location of autumnal equinox! Due to this interpretation, he had fixed the period for dates of Mahabharat war between 2250 BCE to 1280 BCE when autumnal equinox was between Anuradha and Vishakhas. Consequently, he refuses to verify the sky simulations matching the astronomical references of Mahabharat on any dates before 2250 BCE. If, however, the duration of the autumn season is taken as two months, then 960 years before 2250 BCE would also get automatically included, and sky simulations up to 3210 BCE would naturally have to be verified for determining the dates of Mahabharat war.

There are many vital sequences of Mahabharat story, which have entirely been ignored by Shri Bhatnagar. Interpretations of many other references have got distorted because he did not take into account some closely related verses. This proposition is easily explainable if we look at the chronology of Mahabharat events determined by Shri Bhatnagar. As per him, the Mahabharat war had started on 14th October, 1792 BCE.

Astronomical dates of *Mahābhārata* Events determined by Shri Bhatnagar in Chronological Order

Event	Ref. MB Cr Ed	Greg Date (Pl. G.)	No. of days since the war began
Pandavas' departure to Varanavat	1.133/30	05 Jan -1828	-36 yrs
Arjun's exile for 12 years	1.205/30	Around -1825	-
Eclipse Pair	6.3/28,29	5 Apr -1792;	-192 days
		19 Apr -1792	-178
Autumn equinox (reference to autumn)	5.81/7	23 Sep -1792	-21

Krishna's Peace Mission (*Revatī/ Kārtika*)	5.81/7	26 Sep -1792	-18
Lunar Eclipse on *Kartika Pūrnimā*	6.2/23	28 Sep -1792	-16
Planets: Moon, and Mars in Maaghā	6.17/2; 6.3/14	5 Oct -1792	-9
Venus in *Purva/Uttara* Ashādha	6.3/14	20 Sep to 5 Oct -1792	-24 to-9
Sun, Moon afflict Rohinī (from Jyestha)	6.3/16 (17-Cal Edn)	14 Oct -1792	1
Mars afflicts Jyestha (from Maaghā)	5.141/7,8	5-14 Oct -1792	-9 to +1
Jupiter afflicts Rohinī (from Hasta)	8.68/49	5-14 Oct -1792	-9 to +1
Saturn in U Phālguni; afflicts Rohinī	5.141/7,8	5-14 Oct -1792	-9 to +1
War to Begin on Kārttika *Amāvasya*	5.140/17,18	14 Oct -1792	1
Bhishma falls	1.2/26	23 Oct -1792	10
Drona dies	1.2/26	28 Oct -1792	15
Karna killed	1.2/27; 8.68/49	30 Oct -1792	17
Bhima kills Duryodhana in mace duel on the 18th day. War ends	1.2/27	31 Oct -1792	18
Bhishma's demise, WS- Maaghā *S* 8±1	12.47/3; 13.152/10; 13.153/5,6, 26,27,28.	20 Dec -1792	68
Destruction of Vrishnis and *Mahānirvana* of Krishna	16.2/2; 16.3/18; 16.5/21,22	-1756	+36 yrs.

A. Analysis and comments on the above chronology are as under –

1. First two are based purely on the interpretation of seasons. These presume that autumn season was strictly in the month of Kartika, neither before nor after. These also are based on the presumption that since the autumn season was for one month only, the span of time to look for astronomical dates of Mahabharat references was 2250 BCE to 1280 BCE. Since both these

assumptions are incorrect, these two dates are not considered reliable and deserve no other comments. It is well known and well established that the duration of the autumn season is at least two months and the moment the period of consideration is increased to two months, all the calculations would change. Period of consideration for searching astronomical dates of Mahabharat events would get pushed back at least by 960 years to 3210 BCE to 2250 BCE.

2. Shri Bhatnagar has recorded the lunar eclipse followed by a solar eclipse in April, 1792 BCE, which occurred more than six months before the date of war determined by him (14th October, 1792 BCE). These eclipses fall in months of Vaishakh and Jyeshta. In contrast, Mahabharat has clearly mentioned that these two eclipses had taken place in the month of Kartika, just before the war (6/2/23 & 6/3/28-29) and that also when a large number of forces had already assembled in Kurukshetra. I need not elaborate this further as Shri Bhatnagar himself seems to be aware of this fact as he has referred to the relevant verses in his paper. Therefore, these are certainly not the dates of eclipses recorded in Mahabharat; these could be dates of any other eclipses.

3. Because of the position stated in Mahabharat about eclipses occurring in Kartika month, Shri Bhatnagar recorded another lunar eclipse on Kartika Purnima on 28th September, 1792 BCE, just two days after Krishna's departure for peace mission. After that, he has recorded that 16 days later on 14th October, 1792 BCE; the war began when there was also a solar eclipse in Kartika month, which was not visible from India. Both these astronomical observations also do not tally with the references in Mahabharat. As per Mahabharat text, a lunar eclipse in the month of Kartika, followed by a solar eclipse in the same month, had occurred a few days before the beginning of the war. Reference to the occurrence of these two eclipses was made by sage Vyas when he had come to warn Dhritarashtra about the catastrophic consequences of war which had the potential of being the most disastrous war in the history of humanity. There is no reference in Mahabharat to the beginning of the war on the day of the solar eclipse of Kartika month. In fact, the war had begun in the month of Margashirsha when Amavasya moon was in Jyeshta, and till date, we celebrate Gita Jayanti on Shukla Ekadashi in the month of Margashirsha.

4. At serial number 4, Shri Bhatnagar has given the date of an autumnal equinox as 23rd September, 1792 BCE, and has fixed the duration of the autumn season as one month only. Whereas under all other astronomical calculations, the autumn season would begin on autumnal equinox day and would last for

two-three months. That is why the meteorology department and many other entities take the duration of autumn season from September 1 to November 30. The moment the length and period of the autumn season is corrected, the entire astronomical date sequence of Mahabharat references prepared by Shri Bhatnagar around 1782 BCE would collapse like a pack of cards.

5. After referring to a Kartika Lunar Eclipse on 28th September, 1792 BCE, at serial number 6, Shri Bhatnagar, at serial numbers 7-12, has given certain planetary positions recorded in Udyog Parva and Bhishma Parva. He has commented that most of these are internally inconsistent and some were observable on different dates. He has also said that the stated astronomical positions could not be correct and he has himself proposed many changes to the text of Mahabharat for displaying these positions. For example, in verse 6/3/14 it has been recorded in Mahabharat that Venus was located in Purva Bhadrapada and was proceeding towards Uttar Bhadrapada (in Pisces). However, considering this observation as impossible in 1792 BCE, Shri Bhatnagar changed the location to Purva Ashadh and Uttar Ashadh (in Sagittarius and Capricornus). I am constrained to say that this had happened because he was verifying the astronomical positions around the wrong time and wrong dates in 1792 BCE. If he had referred to the original verses of Mahabharat from 6/3/14 to 6/3/18, and 6/2/23 read with 6/3/32; and then done more appropriate translations of some of the verses by referring to some reliable dictionaries, then he could have verified all the recorded planetary positions in/around 3139 BCE. Then, he could have seen all the stated planetary positions without any inconsistencies/inaccuracies/changes in the sky view generated by the planetary softwares, on one single date and that also just before the Solar eclipse of Kartika month, a few days before the war, i.e. on 14th September 3139 BCE.

6. At serial number 13 of Chronology of Mahabharat References, Shri Bhatnagar has said that the war began on Kartika Amavasya day on 14th October, 1792 BCE; on this date, there was solar eclipse which was not visible from Hastinapur. Reliance has been placed on verse 5/140/17-18 of Udyog Parva in which Krishna told Karna that weather was pleasant and war could commence on the next no-moon day, which would occur in Jyeshta Nakshatra. There is no reference to the war starting on Kartika Amavasya in the Mahabharat, nor there is any reference to any solar eclipse on that date of the beginning of the war. The war had indeed begun on Amavasya day when the Moon was in Jyeshta, but it was Amavasya in the month of Margashirsha. We all know that Lord Krishna had revealed the profound philosophy of

Bhagavad Gita to Arjun just before the war began. It is recorded in the third person as Sanjay narrated the same to Dhritrashtra after Bhishma's fall on the 10th day (6/13/1-4). Gita Jayanti is celebrated all over India on 11th day of the waxing phase of moon of Margashirsha month. All these facts make it abundantly clear that war had actually started on the no-moon day of Margashirsha month and not of Kartika month. Thus, the Margashirsha Amavasya day of 13th October (8th November as per Stellarium), 3139 BCE, appears to be the real date on which war might have begun.

7. For the next four chronological references from 14-17, Mr Bhatnagar has reverted to Adi Parva, chapter 2 of Parva 1, and has tried to determine the dates of deaths of Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Shalya and Duryodhana. This chapter gives only a very broad summary of events recorded in Mahabharat and does not give any definite and verifiable information. It is surprising that a scholar of the calibre of Shri Bhatnagar resorted to such inappropriate referencing. There are full-fledged Parvas titled Bhishma Parva, Drona Parva, Karna Parva, Shalya Parva, containing many chapters with comprehensive details of the war fought and ultimate deaths of Bhishma, Drona, Karan, Shalya and Duryodhana. Mr Bhatnagar adopted a short cut method to avoid reading thousands of verses of those chapters of Mahabharat. As a result, a major part of the story got out of sight of Mr Bhatnagar. He presumed that Bhima killed Duryodhana on the 18th day of war just after Yudhishthir had killed Shalya. Consequently, his entire subsequent calculations of the date of Duryodhana's demise, of Balaram's return journey, of Bhishma's statements about Yudhishthir's visit went wrong. Mr Bhatnagar has relied upon Ganguli's Mahabharat text wherein, in chapters 29 to 61 of Shalya Parva, the entire sequence of events after Shalya's death and till the killing of Duryodhana in mace battle by Bhima has clearly been recorded, which is summarized as under –

   I. After getting almost 11 Akshauhini of army slaughtered, sorely wounded Duryodhana was left almost alone in the battlefield. With mace in hand Duryodhana walked towards a lake and lived therein after creating an illusion around him to heal his wounds.

   II. For a few days, Pandavas and their spies searched for him all around but could not find him anywhere. Finally, some hunters heard Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman talking to Duryodhana, who was hiding in Dvaipayan Lake and passed on the information to Pandavas.

   III. Pandavas went there and challenged Duryodhana to a mace fight, as they knew that so long as Duryodhana was alive, war could not be considered

as won. After his pilgrimage, Balaram came there in Shravan Nakshatra. Immediately thereafter the mace battle took place in Samantapanchak, where they had all gone on being so advised by Balaram.

IV. During the mace battle, Bhima killed Duryodhana. Thus it took about 12-13 more days that Bhima could kill Duryodhana in the mace battle. On the same night, Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman committed the heinous crime of killing Pandava children and Panchal warriors in their sleep.

V. The war had started on 13th October, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium dates (8th November, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium), and it formally came to an end when Shalya was killed on 31st October, 3139 BCE, (26th November, 3139 BCE, per Stellarium). Bhima had killed Duryodhana in the mace battle in Shravan Nakshatra on 14th November, 3139 BCE, (10th December, 3139 BCE, per Stellarium).

VI. Thus, reference in Mahabharat that Balaram left for pilgrimage in Pushya Nakshatra and came back after 42 days in Shravan Nakshatra to watch the Mace battle is internally consistent. Consequently, the entire chapter on 'Resolving Ambiguities' on pages 385-387 by Shri Bhatnagar has become irrelevant, having no connection with references in Mahabharat.

8. Admittedly, Shri Bhatnagar has not been able to display triplet of solar eclipses by taking 1792, as the year of the war. He thinks that total solar eclipse at Dwarka after 36 years of war could be a later interpolation in the text of Mahabharat. However, this triplet of solar eclipses could be seen sequentially on 18th November, 3153 BCE, from Hastinapur, 14th September, 3139 BCE, from Hastinapur (preceded by a lunar eclipse on 31st August, 3139 BCE) and 3rd March, 3102 BCE, from Dwarka (15th December, 3153 BCE, 11th October, 3139 BCE, and 29th March, 3102 BCE, as per Stellarium sky simulations).

9. There is nothing very seriously wrong in the determination of 20th December, 1792 BCE, as the occurrence of winter Solstice on Maagh Shukla Ashtami on 68th day of the war. However, considering the context, it would have probably been more appropriate if it was Saptami. As it took at least one day for Yudhishthir to travel from Hastinapur to Kurukshetra after the beginning of Uttarayan and, thereafter, for Bhishma in meeting, greeting, and sermonizing to Yudhishthir and the other family members. Only after that Bhishma left for his heavenly abode on Maagh Shukla Ashtami which is celebrated as Bhishma's Nirvana day till date. It would not be out of place to mention that

Winter solstice had occurred on Maagh Shukla Saptami on 19th December, 3139 BCE (per Planetarium), which was 67th day after the beginning of the war. On that date, Yudhishthir came to Kurukshatra from Hastinapur for the last rites of Bhishma Pitamah. Yudhishthir went to meet Bhishma Pitamah. After meeting Yudhishthir and others, Bhishma left for his *mahaprayan* on Maagh Shukla Ashtami, i.e. 68th day after the beginning of the war. One is unable to appreciate why Shri Bhatnagar decided to make the verification in the year 3140 BCE for the occurrence of the winter solstice on Maagh Shukla Saptami/Ashtami as that is not the year of war accepted traditionally or by the scientific community. Shri Bhatnagar should have verified the position in 3139/3138 BCE.

10. It is a matter of great convenience that both the author of this book and Mr Bhatnagar have used the same sky simulation softwares, namely Planetarium Gold (Gregorian calendar) and Stellarium. Shri Bhatnagar has said that the date of Vernal Equinox remains nearly fixed around 21–22 March in Planetarium Gold over millennia; it keeps drifting in Stellarium from 21st March during 2015 to 17 April in -3000. Consequently, for the same sky view, Stellarium is about 26 dates ahead of Planetarium around 3000 BCE and about 15-16 days ahead around 1800 BCE, which is entirely correct.

11. Shri Bhatnagar has mentioned that, as per the great scientist Aryabhatt, there was a grand Kali era conjunction of the Sun, the Moon, and five planets in 3102 BCE at the initial point of Mesha (Aries). However, Shri Bhatnagar thinks that no such Kali era conjunction was seen around 3102 BCE. He believes that close passes of bright planets are not very rare. Such an assemblage in the past may not serve as a unique identifier for the Kali Yuga beginning. Shri Bhatnagar, however, has ignored the fact that, as per Aryabhatt, such an assemblage must be at the initial point of Mesha, i.e. Aries (which means in Aries and Pisces) and that does not happen in thousands of years. The assemblages, if any, would move from one Nakshatra to others and thus take a round of 27 Nakshatras. A spectacular assemblage of Sun, Moon and five bright planets was seen on the eastern horizon at the entry point of Aries at the dawn time on 19th February, 3101 BCE. (this is the historical year 3102 BCE) This striking sight in the morning must have come down as a legend associated with the beginning of Kali Era, i.e. Kaliyug. Strangely this sky simulation confirms the traditional view that kali era began at the dawn time on 19th February, 3102 BCE. Such an assemblage at the initial point of Aries has not been observed on any other date during the last 25920 years. This sky view is also included in this book.

12. Shri Bhatnagar limited the period of his search for Mahabharat dates to 2250-1280 BCE because he defined the duration of the autumn season as only one month of Kartik. Actually, the season continues for about three months from mid-August to mid-November i.e. Ashwin, Kartik and Margashira months. Then, he has adopted Amanta month. If month adopted was Purnimanta and even if 15 days of earlier/later month were included, the entire date sequence for Mahabharat war determined by Shri Bhatnagar would lose its very basis and would fall apart. One would have to go and search for astronomical dates of Mahabharat references at least 960 years earlier, i.e. 3210 BCE to 2250 BCE. This would take us to somewhere near the traditionally accepted date of 3139 BCE for Mahabharat war and sequential astronomical sky views recorded in this book would prove this traditional view to be correct.

13. Shri Bhatnagar has categorically stated that he has ignored all the planetary positions recorded in chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva as they are inconsistent and self-contradictory. He has also almost rejected the references to a triplet of solar eclipses as a possible later interpolation. I wish Shri Bhatnagar had picked up Sanskrit-Hindi or Sanskrit-English Dictionaries to do a more appropriate translation of some of the relevant verses containing planetary references in Chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva. If he had observed the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE, using Planetarium, just before the Amavasya of Kartika month in 3139 BCE, he could have observed all the seven planetary positions with reference to stated 14 Nakshatras at the same time in the sky. These very verses would have become the most important references for dating of Mahabharat war. For greater details reference may be made to Chapter 29 of this book entitled 'Astronomical dating of planetary positions observed before the commencement of war'.

14. Let it be emphatically said that in Mahabharat, verses contained in chapters 2 and 3 of Bhishma Parva, there is a complete description of the sequential sky observations starting with a lunar eclipse in Kartika Month *on first Purnima* (VI/2/23), a near-solar eclipse during the same month of Kartika (VI/3/29). The Lunar eclipse could be observed on 31st August, 3139 BCE (26th September, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium) when it is the Purnima at the beginning of Kartika month, and a near solar eclipse could be observed on 14th September, 3139 BCE (11th October, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium). Just before this solar eclipse all the astronomical positions covering almost all planets and constellations sequentially described in 6/3/14-19 could be observed in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE (10th October, 3139 BCE, as per Stellarium). It is further added, that this skyview clinches all disputes about the dating of the Mahabharat war because all these planetary positions, covering the location of

seven planets vis-à-vis 14 Nakshatras, have not been observed on any other date during last 25920 years. In any case, these were not seen at anytime around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or 1478 BCE. These astronomical positions were described by Sage Vyas himself, just before the commencement of the war when he came to warn Dhritarashtra about the disastrous consequences of war after Kaurava and Pandava forces were standing opposite each other in Kurukshetra. Therefore, these could not be ignored.

To conclude, it has to be conceded that none of the sky simulations included by Shri Bhatnagar in his paper exactly matches the references in Mahabharat, nor do these sequentially match. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the conclusions drawn by him.

Critical appraisal of Dr Iyengar's paper on Mahabharat Dating entitled: "Internal Consistency of Eclipses and Other Planetary positions in Mahabharat", published in Indian Journal of History of Science in 2003.

Dr Iyengar's findings are that the year 1478 BCE is the likely year of Mahabharat war, because the two eclipses, Lunar eclipse followed by Solar Eclipse in 13-14 days, could have possibly occurred on 16th May, 1478 BCE, and 1st June, 1478 BCE. He also tried to verify if a Solar Eclipse was observed 14-15 years before the war when Pandavas left for 12 years of exile and 13th year of living incognito after losing everything in the game of dice. After that, he went on to verify if there was a solar eclipse seen from Dwarka 35-36 years after the war at Kurukshetra. After checking the details using Planetarium software and Eclipse software, he went on to conclude that a Lunar Eclipse followed by a solar eclipse within the same month was observed in 1478 BCE. Fourteen-fifteen years earlier in 1493 BCE, a Solar Eclipse could also be observed from Hastinapur. In the 35th year after the war, i.e. in 1443 BCE, a Solar Eclipse could be seen from Dwarka. Consequently, Dr Iyengar concluded that references to a triplet of eclipses in Mahabharat are internally consistent and these could be seen in 1493-1443 BCE.

The research methodology adopted as well as conclusions drawn by Dr Iyengar are summarized as under –

1. Many Sanskrit verses, which were relevant for astronomical dating of Mahabharat events, were extracted from Mahabharat. The ones, which were self-contradictory or inconsistent, were ignored; whereas the ones, which were relevant in his opinion, were identified for determining the dates of Mahabharat eclipses.

2. Dr Iyengar searched the period between 3000 BCE and 501 BCE, with the help of planetarium and eclipse softwares (EZC and PVIC softwares). A list of years in which double eclipses, i.e. lunar eclipse followed by solar eclipse in the same month had occurred, were listed as possible candidates for the year of Mahabharat war. There were 31 candidates, and all these were listed in the table prepared by him.

3. After that, out of these 31 candidate years, Dr Iyengar shortlisted those compatible with the occurrence of Solar Eclipse at Dwarka within 34-36 years of the Mahabharat war. Only 13 out of a list of 31 could qualify that condition. As a result, the list of possible candidates for war got reduced to 13.

4. After that, a search was done if any Solar Eclipse had occurred 13-15 years before the war in any of these 13 selected years (Sabha Parva 2/80/29). As a result, the list got reduced to 8 as these were the only years when eclipse could be observed from Hastinapur 13-15 years before the solar eclipse preceded by a lunar eclipse was observed just before the beginning of the war.

5. On all these eight sequences, Saturn was near Rohini at the time of war beginning in 1478 BCE. However, another important condition as per Iyengar was that on *Kartika Krishna Ashtami*, Mars was between Jyeshtha and Anuradha, i.e. in Scorpius. This condition, according to him, was fulfilled only by one candidate year, i.e. 1478 BCE. During this year on 20.9.1478 BCE, Mars was between Jyeshta and Anuradha, but not in a retrograde position; no other observations of this date were verified by him.

6. Given the above-stated facts, Dr Iyengar concluded that the war must have occurred in the year 1478 BCE, when Lunar Eclipse was observed on 15th May 1478 BCE, followed by Solar Eclipse on 1st June, 1478 BCE. Thereafter, he went on to conclude, based on Mahabharat references, that war was fought after the month of Kartika, i.e. after Kartik Purnima of 12.10.1478 BCE.

7. Dr Iyengar went on to add that on 1.6.1478 BCE, i.e. Solar Eclipse day before the war, other planetary positions also matched which according to him were Saturn in Bharani, Jupiter in Revati, Venus in Punarvasu and Mars in Krittika-Rohini. He decided to ignore the comprehensive planetary positions described in Bhishma Parva (6/3/14-19) saying that these were misplaced and might be belonging to some other chapter.

Critical analysis of conclusions arrived at by Dr Iyengar –

With utmost respect for the knowledge and expertise of Dr Iyengar, a humble attempt was made to analyze if conclusions arrived at by him were internally

consistent with the sequence of three Solar Eclipses mentioned in Mahabharat as also with other references in Mahabharat. In this regard, following facts are noteworthy –

I. The traditionally accepted year of Mahabharat war is 3139 BCE, but Dr Iyengar limited his search to 3000 BCE to 501 BCE. He himself has highlighted this fact in his paper pointing out about the limitation of the softwares used by him. He has also recorded that it would be interesting if someone verifies the consistency and sequence of Mahabharat references and determines their date sequence for the period before 3000 BCE. It is clarified categorically that when such verification was done, using more reliable softwares like Planetarium Gold (version 4.1) and Stellarium (version 0.19.0), it was found that much more credible sequence of three Solar eclipses was observed in 3153 BCE to 3102 BCE. All the other planetary positions described in Mahabharat match fully well and much better than what had been shown by Dr Iyengar.

II. Dr Iyengar concluded that during 3000 BCE to 501 BCE, there were eight such years when triplet of these solar eclipses was observed. Still, he selected 1478 BCE, only because sometime in that year, Mars was between Jyeshta and Anuradha (i.e. Scorpius). He, however, conceded that it was not in retrograde motion as has been mentioned in relevant verse in Mahabharat, relied upon by Shri Iyengar (Udyog Parva 5/142/8-10). Thus, it is obvious that this selection is rather dicey.

III. Dr Iyengar has worked out the dates of two eclipses in the month of Ashadh i.e. on 15th May, and 1st June, of 1478 BCE, but he has said that the war was fought sometime after the month of Kartika, i.e. after 14.10.1478 BCE. I am constrained to say that this presumption is not in accordance with the text and sequence of events narrated in Mahabharat. Seven Akshauhini forces of Yudhishthir and 11 Akshauhini forces of Duryodhana were standing in Kurukshetra facing each other, and the war was about to begin when Sage Vyas came to meet Dhritarashtra. He described the adverse planetary positions and other inauspicious signs which forebode terrible slaughter; these have been recorded in chapters 2 and 3 of Bhishma Parva. Sage Vyas tried to persuade Dhritarashtra to prevent war somehow but after having failed, he left within 1-2 days. Sage Vyas had very clearly referred to the two eclipses, lunar eclipse followed by a solar eclipse, occurring in the month of Kartika (6/2/23, 6/3/32). Therefore the eclipses in the month of Ashadh relied upon by Dr Iyengar have no connection with the dating of Mahabharat references; these could be some other eclipses.

IV. As per Dr Iyengar, eight candidate years were equally placed for being treated as Mahabharat triplet of Solar eclipses, but 1478 BCE, was selected only because Mars was between Jyeshta and Anuradha Nakshatras in that year on 20.9.1478 BCE but not in retrograde motion. This premise is again not in accordance with Mahabharat text. Just before the Solar Eclipse and before the beginning of the war, Mars is mentioned as located in Magha (as per traditional translation) but a more appropriate translation of verse 6/3/14 would be that it was comfortably entering its own house, i.e. Aries in retrograde motion. This had actually happened on 14th September, 3139 BCE. Such inaccuracies have crept in at several places because, apparently, Dr Iyengar took a very deficient meaning of the term afflicting or aspecting; he adopted the meaning being 'location in the same House' whereas it could mean many locations, the chart for which is given hereunder –

Object	Aspecting/Afflicting House/ Nakshatra /constellation
Sun	7th from its position
Moon	7 th -do-
Venus	7 th -do-
Mars	4 th , 7 th , 8th -do-
Jupiter	3 rd , 7 th , 9 th, -do-
Saturn	3 rd , 7 th ,10 th - do-

Thus planets like Saturn, Jupiter and Mars could cause affliction from three different locations. Since Dr Iyengar ignored this accepted fact, many other inaccuracies have crept in the conclusions drawn by Dr Iyengar.

V. It is added with emphasis that verses VI.2.23 to VI.3.32 of Mahabharat contain a complete description of sequential sky observations, starting with a lunar eclipse in Kartika Month *on first Purnima* (VI/2/23). The Lunar eclipse could be observed on 31st August, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium, and after that, all the astronomical positions covering almost all planets and constellations referred to in these verses of Mahabharat could be observed in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE (VI/3/14-19). This was just a few hours before Kartika Amavasya day of 14th September, when a near-Solar eclipse had occurred (VI/3/29). It is further added that this Skyview, in fact, clinches all disputes about the dating of the Mahabharat war. All these planetary positions, with reference to 14 constellations, have not been observed on any other date during last 10000

years, particularly not anytime around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or 1478 BCE.

VI. Dr Iyengar has out-rightly rejected all the cantos from 6/3/14 to 6/3/19 saying that these contradict other stated position of the planets and do not seem to be belonging to this chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva. Actually in these cantos, Sage Vyas has described the planetary positions observed just before the solar eclipse which occurred a few days before the beginning of the war. These could all be observed in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE, just a few hours before solar eclipse on Amavasya of Kartika month in 3139 BCE. In fact, if verification had been done by Dr Iyengar in the years before 3000 BCE, then these very verses would have become the most important references for the dating of Mahabharat war.

VII. The planetary positions, as narrated in 6/3/14-19 of Mahabharat and translated using Sanskrit-Hindi and Sanskrit-English dictionaries are summarized as under, which reveal that the two eclipses before the war were observed in the month of Kartika and, therefore, eclipses of Ashadh had no relevance to the dating of the Mahabharat War–

अलक्ष्यः प्रभयाहीनः पौर्णमासीं च कार्तिकीम् ।
चन्द्रोऽभूदग्निवर्णश्च पद्मवर्णनभस्तले ।। भीष्म पर्व, 23/2/6।।
चतुर्दशीं पञ्चदशीं भूतपूर्वां च षोडशीम् ।
इमां तु नाभिजानेऽहममावास्यां त्रयोदशीम् ।
चन्द्रसूर्यावुभौ ग्रस्तावेकमासीं त्रयोदशीम् ।। भीष्म पर्व, 6/3/32

Meaning - In the night of the Full Moon in Kartik month, the Moon lost its splendour and became invisible/looked like fire; this is an obvious reference to a lunar eclipse. After that, Sage Vyas said that a lunar fortnight had hitherto consisted of 14 days or 15 days or even of 16 days, but on the 13th day and in the same month two eclipses, both lunar and solar, have taken place.

VIII. Both these eclipses could be seen in the month of Kartika on 31st August, and 14th September, 3139 BCE, as per details given in this book. The details of all planetary positions mentioned as observed by Sage Vyas a few hours before the solar eclipse on 14th September, in verses 6/3/14-19 of Bhishma Parva, which have been considered as irrelevant by Shri Iyengar, could all be observed at the same time in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE, as per Planetarium. This sky simulation has been included in this book and reproduced in this chapter in the preceding Paras. This sky view

is exclusive and puts an end to all disputes about the astronomical dating of Mahabharat references as it does not get repeated on any other date during last 25920 years, certainly not around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE.

IX. Dr Iyengar went on to add that on 1.6.1478 BCE, i.e. Solar Eclipse day before the war, other planetary positions also matched which according to him were Saturn in Bharani, Jupiter in Revati, Venus in Punarvasu and Mars in Krittika-Rohini. All these three positions are not as per locations narrated in Mahabharat by Sage Vyas and could not be observed on any single date around the solar eclipse day or just before that.

X. The most critical astronomical reference in Mahabharat is of the beginning of Uttarayan on expiry of one-fourth of the month of Maagh on 67th day after the war beginning, as next day on Maagh Shukla Ashtami, Bhishma left for his Mahaprayan. Dr Iyengar has not provided the sky simulation or date for this in 1478 BCE. Whereas after the war in 3139 BCE on 13th October, Uttarayan began on Maagh Shukla Saptami on 19th December, 3139 BCE, exactly 67 days after the beginning of the war. This is also a unique date and displays the sky simulation, which does not get repeated in/around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE.

It is, thus, clear that the article written by Dr Iyengar only proves the internal consistency of three solar eclipses over a period of 50 years. It neither gives the dates of Mahabharat war nor do the eclipses mentioned by Dr Iyengar represent the eclipses narrated in Mahabharat. I would like to add that Mahabharat is an epic containing more than one lakh verses, with more than 200 astronomical references. Therefore, these shortcut methods of selecting a more compatible pair or a triplet of solar eclipses, revealed by certain softwares cannot do justice to the dating of Mahabharat, which has made sequential references to astronomical positions spanning more than 52 years. During 1478 BCE, Vernal Equinox was not in Rohini and Uttarayan did not begin on Maagh Shukla Saptami as Bhishma Pitamah left for his heavenly abode the very next day on Maagh Shukla Ashtami. The lunar and solar eclipses referred to by Sage Vyas were not observed in the month of Kartika in 1478 BCE, and position of all the seven planets with reference to 16 Nakshatras described by Sage Vyas were not observable as per stated positions in 1478 BCE. Therefore 1478 apparently could not be the year of Mahabharat war.

Critical Analysis of Mahabharat Dating done by Shri Nilesh Oak in his thesis entitled, 'When did the Mahabharat War Happen: The Mystery of Arundhati'

Mahabharat contains more than a hundred thousand verses and at least two hundred out of these record planetary observations and astronomical positions. Shri Nilesh Oak decided to ignore all other verses and claimed that dating of Mahabharat war should be done based only on verse 31 of chapter 2 of Bhishma Parva, which is reproduced as under –

या चैषा विश्रुता राजंस्त्रैलोक्ये साधुसम्मता ।
अरून्धती तयाप्येष वसिष्ठः पृष्ठतः कृतः ।। (6/2/31)

In the words of Shri Oak, this verse means that "Arundhati, who is celebrated in three worlds and who is praised by the pious men, has appeared first and has relegated Vashishth to follow her." Some other scholars also have given similar translation. By implication, it means that Arundhati had always been seen moving behind Vasishth, but this rule had been violated as Arundhati was seen before Vasishth when Saptarshis constellation was observed in the sky.

Shri Oak has relied only on this single verse for arriving at the dates of Mahabharat war. He is of the opinion that this verse refers to the distance in right ascension between the two stars Mirzar (Vasishth) and Alcor (Arundhati). Although their positions relative to each other are very stable in a sidereal reference frame, the precession of the earth's axis causes an apparent change of their orientation within the equatorial coordinate system. Before about 11,091 BCE, the star Vasishth transited the meridian before the star Arundhati. After that, between 11,091 BCE and 4508 BCE, Arundhati transited the meridian shortly before Vasishth. And finally, since the year 4508 BCE, Vasishth has transited the meridian before Arundhati again. Oak has claimed that Vyas in verse 31 of Chapter 2 of Bhishma Parva refers to this phenomenon.

Shri Oak, however, did not date the war near 11,000 BCE, but as late as 5561 BCE, i.e. about 5500 years after Arundhati and Vasishth had changed their positions. Shri Oak took the view that the separation between the two stars reached a maximum shortly before 5561 BCE and this phenomenon might have been observed only around this year. He further explained that:

"Naked-eye resolution is about one arc-min. The maximum separation (with Arundhati ahead of Vasishth) between Arundhati and Vasishth were around 500 arc-sec, which is about eight arc-min. Thus, one can make a case that while Arundhati began walking ahead of Vasishth as early as 11091 BCE, only around the

time of the Mahabharata War (5561 BCE), it would have become apparent to someone observing them (Arundhati and Vasishth) with the naked eye."

Thus, Shri Oak is assuming that for about 5500 years, people did not realize that Arundhati was moving ahead of Vasishth and only by around 5561 BCE, this realization dawned on them. Therefore, Shri Oak concluded that Mahabharat war had taken place not a day later than 5561 BCE. This dating of Mahabharat war by Shri He suffers from several inconsistencies, inaccuracies and deficiencies –

1. Shri Oak entirely ignores the context in which Sage Vyas spoke this verse (6/2/31). By this time, all peace efforts had failed, and armies of Kauravas and Pandavas were standing opposite each other in Kurukshetra to start the most disastrous war in the history of humanity. Sage Vyas came to Dhritarashtra to warn him about the extremely devastating consequences of war. He stayed with him for not more than a day or two. He described very inauspicious and destructive planetary positions, other bad omens as well as natural disasters, which have been recorded in verses 6/2/16 to 6/3/45 of Bhishma Parva. Sage Vyas had warned that in the month of Kartika, just before the war, both lunar eclipse and solar eclipse had taken place. He had also described the locations of all seven planets vis-à-vis fourteen Nakshatras (6/3/14 to 6/3/18) which could all be observed just before the Solar Eclipse. How could an astronomer think of ignoring all that and pick up only one verse out of context? In fact, any sincere astronomer would first pick up those other references, generate the sky views of the corresponding sequential astronomical dates and identify the ones which would be exclusive in 25920 years under the accepted rules of astronomy.

2. Shri Oak either is ignorant of or chooses to ignore that Vashisht – Arundhati position in this verse could be only a visibility situation. In the words of eminent astronomer Dr Iyengar, this verse 6/2/31 in Mahabharat only refers to visibility condition. That Arundhati & Vashisht were always seen together is a fact. Since these are in the Saptarshi constellation, the (7+1) members of which remained circumpolar and hence did not rise or set over a long time for observers in North India. The question to be answered was that the community that always saw these two together saw Arundhati first and had to wait for a few minutes before Vashishth could become visible in the night sky? Dr Iyengar has further explained that, "turning our attention to A-V: Arundhati δ (2000) = 54-59-17 & Vasishth δ (2000) = 54-55-31; their relative position ($\delta V < \delta A$) has remained stable over centuries. For circum-polarity the condition is (δ+Latitude) > 90 degrees". Conversely, for any place at any

chosen critical altitude of visibility, Vashisht loses circum-polarity first. The PLVS star visibility software (www.alcyone.de) shows that, at Patna, at 4 degrees critical altitude, Mizar (Vashisht) lost Circum Polarity during 415-416 BCE, whereas this happened to Arundhati 10 years later (404-405 BCE). The screenshot of the star visibility for 410 BCE shows that, early morning in the months of August-September, Arundhati became visible first, and Vashisht became visible a few minutes later. Therefore, Vashishth-Arundhati Verse in Mahabharat (6/2/31) only refers to the visibility condition and is of no use or relevance in arriving at the astronomical dates of Mahabharat war events.

3. There is a clear reference to triplet of solar eclipses in Mahabharat, i.e. first solar eclipse when Pandavas left for exile after losing everything in the game of dice, about 14 years later, a few days before the war a solar eclipse was observed, preceded by a Lunar eclipse in the same month; after 36-37 years of war, a solar eclipse was seen in Dwarka. Shri Oak has entirely ignored these references. Through this book, I wish to make a very humble suggestion to him that he should take note of the fact that these solar eclipses were actually observed on November 18, 3153 BCE, from Hastinapur, September 14, 3139 BCE, from Hastinapur and on March 3, 3102 BCE, from Dwarka. Mahabharat has also very clearly recorded the location of all seven planets in relation to 14 Nakshatras in verses 6/3/14-19; all these could be seen in the sky on 14th September, 3139 BCE. This sky view is exclusive and is not observable on any other date during the last 25920 years. Mahabharat clearly states that Yudhishthir came to Bhishma Pitamah after the northward movement of the Sun had begun on the 58th day of Bhishma's fall and 68th day after the war beginning of the war, after one-fourth of Maagh month had passed (13/167/27-28). Occurrence of Winter Solstice on Magh Shukla Saptami could be observed on 19th December, 3139 BCE. Next day on Maagh Shukla Ashtami was Bhishma's demise. This was 68th day after the beginning of the war on 13th Oct, 3139 BCE; all these positions perfectly match with the Mahabharat text. All these are the sequential planetary references relevant for determining the astronomical dates of Mahabharat war. That visibility condition verse in Mahabharat (6/2/31) describing Vashishth - Arundhati visibility has no significance for determining the dates of Mahabharat war.

I feel constrained to record that Shri Oak is not making any serious attempt to determine astronomical dates of references in Mahabharat. There are more than 200 references to planetary and astronomical positions in Mahabharat. Therefore, one should make sincere efforts to do sequential dating of such astronomical references contained in this great Epic. It needs to be appreciated that Ramayan and Mahabharat record astronomical observations at the time of many important

events, which are sequentially narrated in those Epics. Therefore, the observations of location of planets, their position with reference to stars and constellations, and the geo coordinates of places of observation are of great importance. Very intensive effort is required to be put in to arrive at correct astronomical date sequence of events narrated therein. It is rather dangerous to pick up one or two references at random, assign some unsustainable meaning and then claim that the entire date sequence is presumed as determined. Shri Oak has precisely done that. He never extracted the sequential astronomical references from Mahabharat and consequently did not generate the corresponding sky views nor did he ever identify the date of the beginning of Mahabharat war.

APPENDIX 3

List of Astronomical and Historical Dates of Planetary References in Mahabharat

There is a need to take note of the fact that all the dates mentioned as BCE in this book, particularly below the sky simulations, are actually astronomical dates in BCE. In order to arrive at the corresponding historical dates, we have to add one to the year, displayed below the sky view by both Planetarium and Stellarium softwares. The reason being that Planetarium, based on the Gregorian calendar, did not have year 0 in its scheme whereas Stellarium did provide for 0, but normalized 1 BCE as 0th astronomical year. Either way, by adding 1 to the corresponding astronomical year of BCE, one shall get the historical date of BCE. Thus, the year of Mahabharat war, determined as 3139 BCE, is actually the astronomical year of BCE, whereas the historical year would be 3140 BCE. Similarly, the position of all the seven planets vis-à-vis 14 constellations, observed just before the solar eclipse on 10th October, 3139 BCE, prior to the Mahabharat war, is the astronomical date displayed by the Stellarium software; however, the historical date would be 10th October, 3140 BCE.

The correct sequence of astronomical dates of Mahabharat events has been determined by taking into account astronomical references, spanning more than 52 years (3153 BCE to 3101 BCE). These are narrated in Sabha Parva, Vana Parva, Udyog Parva, Bhishma Parva, Shalya Parva, Shanti Parva, Anushasan Parva, Ashwamedhika Parva, and Mausal Parva; and corresponding sky simulations have been included in this book. There are, in fact, more than 200 astronomical references in Mahabharat, but most of these mention only the name of one or two Nakshatra,

or of one or two planets, which get repeated every month. These will get repeated after fixed intervals; therefore, they are not useful in determining the dates of relevant events. Through this book, an effort has been made to identify all dateable references and then corresponding sky simulations have been generated using both Planetarium (Planetarium Gold version 4.1) and Stellarium (version 0.15.2/2017 & 0.19.1/2019; NASA JPL DE431 ephemeris) softwares. All Stellarium sky shots and some significant sky simulations generated using Planetarium as well have been included in the text of this book.

Sage Vyas referred to various positions of planets and nakshatras in verses 6/3/14 to 6/3/18, observed a few hours before the Solar Eclipse; these were considered to be inauspicious, foreboding large-scale destruction. All these positions could be precisely observed in the sky on 10th October, 3139 BCE at 19:50 hours from Hastinapur (29°N, 77°E) as per Stellarium sky shot. The Planetarium displays the same Skyview twenty-six days earlier on 14th September, 3139 BCE. This sky view is exclusive, and it does not get repeated on any other date during the last twenty-six thousand years. It certainly does not get repeated in/around 5561 BCE, 3067 BCE, in 1792 BCE or in 1478 BCE, which are the dates of Mahabharat war worked out by some other reputed scholars and scientists. For this reason, the date of war in 3139 BCE appears to be almost indisputable.

For the sake of convenience of the readers, astronomical years displayed below the sky views, generated by using Planetarium Gold and also sky shots taken using Stellarium software, have been mentioned as BCE years in the text of the book. The reason is that the reader does not get confused as these descriptions match the date and the year displayed on the sky shots, included in the book. However, by adding one year, we shall know the exact corresponding historical year. A chart giving astronomical dates as well as the historical dates, along with the references to the relevant events narrated in Mahabharat, has been prepared and is given hereunder-

Stellarium and Planetarium Dates depicting the same sky views	Astronomical References in Mahabharat	Historical year in BCE	Description of Events to which the corresponding Sky views of References from Mahabharat relate, along with relevant references
Stellarium: Dec. 15, 3153 BCE, 01:42 hrs. Planetarium: Nov. 18, 3153 BCE, 23:50 hrs. Hastinapur	Sabha Parva 2/80/29	3154 BCE	A solar eclipse was observed when Pandavas were leaving Hastinapur for 12 years of exile and one year of living incognito after losing in the game of dice. War started after 14 years approximately.

Stellarium: Sep. 26, 3139 BCE, 13:55 hrs. Planetarium: Aug. 31, 3139 BCE, 11:10 hrs. Hastinapur	Bhishma Parva 6/2/23	3140 BCE	A lunar eclipse on first Purnima of Kartika Month, followed by near solar eclipse within 14 days was observed; foreboding widespread destruction during the war.
Stellarium: Oct. 11, 3139 BCE, 01:50 hrs Hastinapur Planetarium: Sep. 14, 3139 BCE 22:15 hrs. Hastinapur	Bhishma Parva 6/2/23, 6/3/28-32	3140 BCE	Near, Solar eclipse was observed within 14 days of the lunar eclipse in Kartika month. There was *tithikshaya* (loss of a lunar date) on 9th October (12th September as per Planetarium). On next *Amavasya of Margshisha month,* Mahabharat war had actually started.
Stellarium: Oct. 10, 3139 BCE, 19:50 hrs Hastinapur Planetarium: Sept. 14, 3139 BCE 18:20 hrs. Hastinapur	Bhishma Parva. 6/3/14 -18	3140 BCE	Almost all the positions of stars and planets, described in chapter 3 of Bhishma Parva, could be observed in the sky. M*angal* (Mars) was entering its own house, i.e. *Mesha* (Aries) in backwards-forward motion; *Jupiter* was in *Shravan Nakshatra* (in Capricornus). Shani (Saturn) was in Scorpius and was thus aspecting *Uttar Phalguni* (in Leo) which is 10th constellation from Scorpius. The planet Shukra (Venus) was aspecting *Poorva Bhadrapada* & Uttara Bhadrapada, in Pisces. Both Ketu and Mercury were afflicting Jyeshta in Scorpius on 10th October, 3139 BCE. Both Sun and Moon were located in Scorpius; afflicting Rohini. Shukra (Venus) was situated between Chitra & Swati Asterisms, i.e. between Virgo and Libra.

Stellarium: Oct. 21. 3139 BCE, 18:30 hrs. Planetarium: Sep. 25, 3139 BCE, 6:10 hrs.	Udyog Parva 5/83/6-7	3140 BCE	Lord Krishna leaves for last peace mission in Kartika month, in Revati Nakshatra. He leaves from Upaplavya (Viratanagar) and takes about two days to reach Hastinapur.
Stellarium: Oct. 29, 3139 BCE, 19.00 hrs Planetarium: Oct. 3. 3139 BCE, 6:10 hrs.	Shalya Parva 9/34/5-6,	3140 BCE	After the failure of Krishna's peace mission, Balaram leaves for pilgrimage in Pushya Nakshatra. 3-4 days later, Krishna tells Karna that war could begin on next Amavasya.
Stellarium: Nov. 8, 3139 BCE, 06:00 hrs Planetarium: Oct. 13, 3139 BCE, 8:30 hrs. / Hastinapur	Udyog Parva 5/142/17-18	3140 BCE	On this day, the war started after the failure of Shri Krishna's last peace mission. Before that Shri Krishna imparted sermon of Gita to Arjun. This was Jyeshta Amavasya (No moon in Jyeshta) of Margshirsha month (Jyeshta is presided over by Lord Indra (Scorpius/*vrishchika*).
Stellarium: Dec. 10, 3139 BCE, 06:15 hrs Planetarium: Nov. 14, 3139 BCE, 06:50 hrs. / Kurukshetra	Shalya Parva 9/34/5-7	3140 BCE	On this date, Duryodhana got killed in Mace battle. With Shalya's fall, the war came to an end on 26th November, 3139 BCE (Planetarium date - 31st October). Duryodhana went into hiding in Dvaipayana lake. Pandavas could locate him only after 10-12 days. Balaram came back after 42 days in Shravana Nakshatra. Duryodhana got killed in Mace Battle with Bhima.
Stellarium: Jan 14, 3138 BCE, 07:30 hrs Planetarium: Dec. 19, 3139 BCE, 07:20 hrs. Kurukshetra	Anushasan Parva 13/167/26-28	3139 BCE 3140 BCE	There was the occurrence of Winter Solstice on Maagh Shukla Saptami. Next day on Maagh Shukla Ashtami was Bhishma's demise. This was 68th day after the beginning of the war on 8th November (13th Oct. as per Planetarium) Moon was in Rohini, i.e. Taurus Constellation.

Stellarium Feb. 22, 3138 BCE 06.00 hrs. Hastinapur Planetarium: January 26, 3138 BCE 18.00 / Hastinapur	Ashva-medhika Parva 14/72/4	3139 BCE	After Bhishma' Mahaprayan, Yudhishthir was initiated into Ashwamedha yajna (horse sacrifice) by loosening the sacrificial horse under Arjun's protection on Full Moon day of Chitra (beginning of Chaitra month).
Stellarium January 9, 3137 BCE 06.00 / Hastinapur Planetarium: Dec. 14, 3138 BCE ; 9.30 hrs.	Ashva-medhika Parva 14/85/4,8	3138 BCE 3139 BCE	On the 12 day of the lighted fortnight of Maagh Month in Pushya Nakshatra, victorious horse protected by invincible Arjun came back, and horse sacrifice was performed on Full Moon day after that.
Stellarium: March 29 3102 BCE 14:35 hrs. Planetarium: March 3, 3102 BCE 10:30 hrs. / Dwarka	Mausala Parva 16/2/18-19	3103 BCE	Solar Eclipse on $13^{th}/14^{th}$ lunar tithi after Purnima observed from Dwarka after the 36th year of war indicating; annihilation of Yadavas and destruction of Dwarka, proving Gandhari's curse true.
Stellarium: Feb. 19, 3101 BCE, 7:20 hrs Planetarium: Jan. 24, 3101 BCE, 8:00 hrs / Delhi	Adi Parva 1/2/13; Aryabhatia; (Gitikapada-5 & Kalakriya-pada-10) Surya Siddhanta	3102 BCE	A spectacular assemblage of Sun, Moon, & five bright Planets was seen at the starting point of Aries, when Kali era began 37-38 years after the Mahabharat war. Strangely, this sky simulation confirms the traditional view that the Kali era started at the dawn time on 19^{th} February, 3102 BCE.

Almost all the sky simulations generated using Planetarium as well as Stellarium softwares, along with all the relevant references and explanations, had also been given in my Paper titled "Mahabharat Retold with Scientific Evidence", uploaded on sarojbala.blogspot.in. The final version of this paper was uploaded on

http://sarojbala.blogspot.com/2017/ in April 2017, after taking into account critical comments and suggestions conveyed by the scientists and scholars, including Dr Narahari Achar Ji. After April 2017, not even a single criticism has been received against this article. The paper was also published in **Dialogue, Volume 18** and in '**Science and Spirituality in Vedic Tradition', a WAVES India publication of 2018. No criticisms whatsoever were received; instead, the author got some compliments from eminent scholars and scientists. This only proves that** this astronomical date sequence of Mahabharat references is acceptable to most of the scholars and scientists, interested in this subject.

APPENDIX 4

Concept of Yugas Re-examined: Interpretations and Clarifications

Description of *Chaturyuga* in Human years as well as in Divine years as per Manusmriti; 1/65-71 (*Manusmriti, Desdhpandey*) is summarized hereunder -

Yuga	Main period	Sandhya + Sandhyansh	Total Length	Multiply by 360 as one divine yr = 360 human yrs
Krit-yuga	4000	400 + 400	4800 yrs	17,28,000
Treta-yuga	3000	300 + 300	3600 yrs	12,96,000
Dvapara-yuga	2000	200 + 200	2400 yrs	8,64,000
Kali-yuga	1000	100 + 100	1200 yrs	4,32,000
Total	10,000	2000	12,000 yrs	43,20,000 yrs.

Many ancient as well modern scientists and scholars believe that originally Chaturyuga (Satyuga + Treta + Dwapar + Kaliyuga) was of 12000 human years only and that also in descending and ascending order with some more years in between. However, sometime in the remote past, it was misinterpreted as Chaturyuga of divine years. By taking one year of humans as equal to one day of gods (devas), these 12000 years were multiplied by 360 (180 days of northward movement + 180 days of the southward movement of the Sun). As a result, the Chaturyuga of human years was taken at 43,20,000 years (12000*360 = 43,20,000 years). What could be the justification for applying *'divine year'* to the humans and

that also by multiplying Human Chaturyuga of 12000 years with the number of days of the northward and southward movement of the Sun?

I looked into Manusmriti to find the answer. In verses 65, 67, 69-71 of Chapter 1 of Manusmriti, the description of Chaturyuga is as under –

"65. The Sun divided the day and night of the *devas* (gods) and Men. The night is for the sleep of creatures, and the day is for the performance of works/duties.

67. One full year of men makes one day and one night of the gods. The northward movement of the Sun (*Uttarayan)* is their day, and Southward movement (*Dakshinayan*) is their night.

69. The Krita Yuga (Satyuga) consists of four thousand years; four hundred such years form the *Sandhya* and four hundred such years form the *Sandhyansh.*

70. Of the remaining three *yugas,* the duration of each succeeding *Yuga* is less than those of its predecessor by one thousand; it's *Sandhya* and *Sandhyansh,* are respectively less by one hundred years each; thus making the difference of twelve hundred years.

71. Twelve thousand years of such four yugas, as computed before in their order of enumeration, count as one yuga of the devas, i.e. gods.

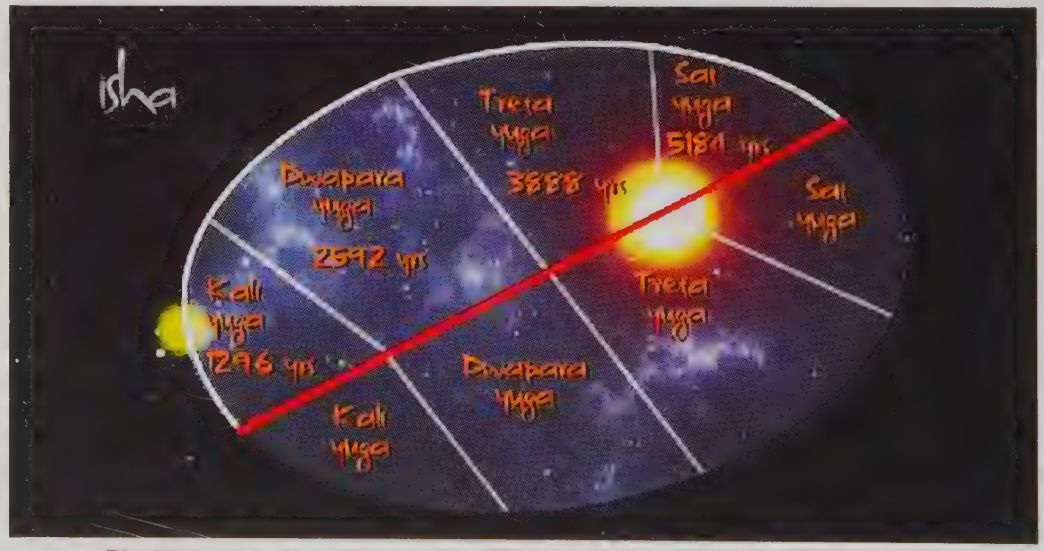
(Very similar verses are also available in chapters 11-13 of 3rd Skandh of Srimad Bhagvada Mahapurana)

The use of expression, 'day and night of gods' in 1/67, considering 180 days of Northward movement of the Sun as their day and 180 days of Southward progression of the Sun as their night, in some remote past was probably interpreted in the manner that these 360 days make one day and night of gods. Therefore, 360 human years were considered as equal to one divine year of gods. Consequently, by multiplying these 12000 divine years of Chaturyuga with 360, the duration of Chaturyuga was taken as 43,20,000 human years.

However, since the most ancient times, many scholars and scientists have disagreed with this interpretation. Nevertheless, it has been followed over the years without review/application of mind. More than 2500 years back eminent Sanskrit sage and scholar, Medhatithi had considered this an error and had put the duration of Chaturyuga at 12000 human years only. During the last sixty years, several scholars, sages and scientists have also held this view. Jaggi Vasdev Ji, Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, Pandit Bhagwaddutt Satyashrava, Shri K M Ganguli, Shri Richard Thompson and many others, have written books and articles and have delivered lectures explaining with credible justification this view of Yuga cycles.

Therefore, a Chaturyuga may indeed comprise only of 12000 years. Besides, there have to be descending and ascending cycles of Chaturyuga, with some more years in between. This takes us to the completion of the precession cycle by Earth in 25920 years, which is accepted by modern Astronomy! Even Glaciology supports this view and holds that this might be the seventh such Yuga cycle (seventh Manvantra?) going on.

Hon'ble Jaggi Vasdev Ji has explained the cycle of four Yugas saying, "The precession, caused by gradual rotation of the Earth's axis, of the equinoxes is the time that it takes the Earth's axis to pass through one complete cycle of the zodiac. It takes the planet 72 years to pass through one degree of the zodiac and, years to complete one full circle of 360 degrees. One half of the journey takes, years and covers the four Yugas. *Satya Yuga* lasts 5184 years. *Treta Yuga* lasts for 3888 years. Dwapara Yuga lasts 2592 years. *Kali Yuga* lasts 1296 years. These four yugas taken together come to a total of 12,960 years." Descending and Ascending cycles of *Chaturyugas* complete a cycle of 25920 years. (*Sadhguru 2003*) Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev also relates these descending and ascending sequences of *Chaturyugas* to downward and upward movement of human consciousness. The good news is that he believes that currently, it is *Dvapara Yuga* and not *Kali Yuga*, and that also in its ascending phase. Hon'ble Jaggi Vasdev Ji has explained this *Yuga cycle* connecting it with one complete cycle of precession of Equinoxes by way of the following image–



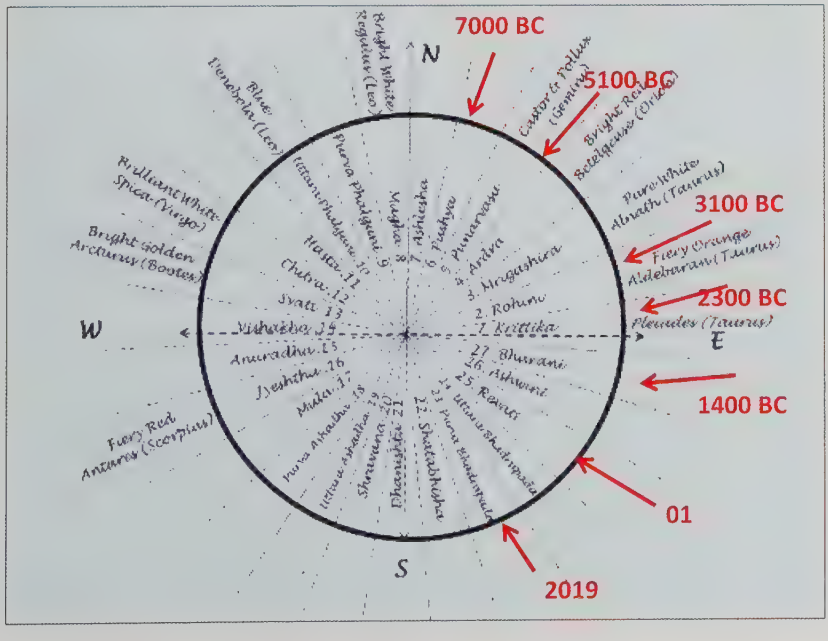
Pic. 56: Yuga cycle and precession of Equinoxes explained by Jaggi Vasudev Ji

The solar system, with the Sun and the planets around it, is moving in the galaxy. It takes, years for our solar system to complete one cycle around a more massive star. Sadhguru has also explained that this big star/big system, around

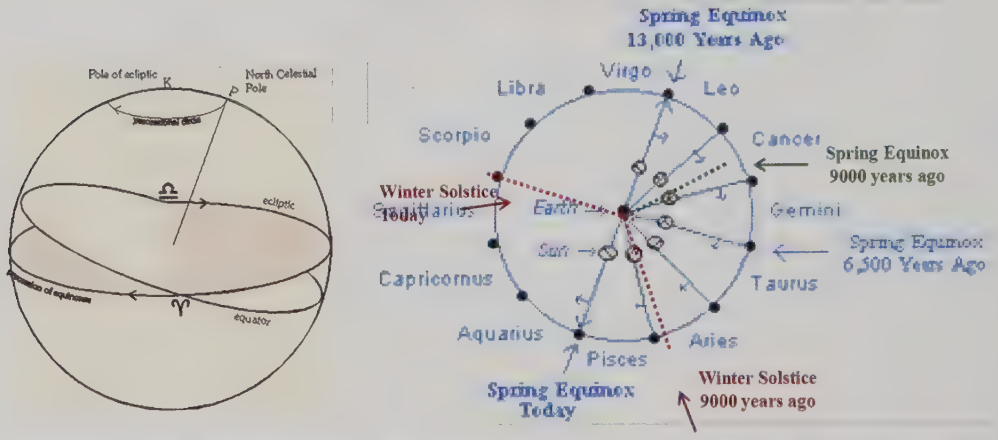
which our solar system is going, is not located in the centre of the orbit. Whenever, our solar system comes closer to this big star, all the creatures living on planet earth rise to greater possibilities. On the other hand, when our system moves away from it, the creatures living in our system come to the lowest level of potential. Whenever our solar system is closer to the "Super Sun," Satya Yuga will begin. The human mind will then be at its highest capability. People's ability to know life, people's ability to communicate, people's ability to live joyfully will be at its highest.

Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri has explained the 12000 years of descending and 12000 years of ascending Chaturyuga cycles by correlating the precession of Equinox with the mental virtues of the inner world *(The Holy Science)*. He has explained that the Sun also revolves around a grand centre called *Vishnunabhi*, which is the seat of creative power known as Brahma, the universal magnetism. When the Sun comes nearest to the Vishnunabhi, which event takes place when Autumnal Equinox comes to the first point in Aries, the mental virtues are the most developed; therefore, that would be Sat Yuga. When Sun goes to the farthest point, it is Kaliyuga. As per Sri Yukteswar Giri, Autumnal Equinox was in the first point of Aries around 11501 BCE; thus, the human intellect was at its best at that time, and after that, it began to diminish. Therefore, by the end of descending *Kali Yuga* in around 499 CE (11501 – 12000), it was at its lowest. Thereafter, there were 1200 years of ascending *Kali Yuga* and currently it is *Dwapara yuga* going on.

The precession cycle of Vernal Equinox during last 25920 years



Precession of Vernal (Spring) Equinox and Winter Solstice through ages; their correlation with Yuga cycles



Equinoxes move westward along the ecliptic relative to the fixed stars @ of about 50.3 seconds of arc per year, @ 1° degree every 72 years and full 360° in 25920 years. Since there are 27 Nakshatras, the Equinox moves behind by one Nakshtra in 960 years and by one constellation in 2160 years. Needless to add that Autumnal Equinox is exactly opposite to Spring Equinox.; therefore at present Autumnal Equinox is between Virgo and Leo. Today Spring Equinox is in Uttara Bhdrapada in Pisces Constellation and 7100 years back during Ramayan Era it was around eight nakshatras behind in Punarvasu in Gemini Constellation. This diagram is prepared with inputs gathered from modern Astronomers. If 24000 years of descending and Ascending Chaturyuga cycles are replaced by 25920 years, everything tallies and falls in place.

If we look at the principles of modern astronomy, these 12000 years of descending and ascending Chaturyuga cycles have to be replaced by 12960 years each. Twenty-four thousand years of Descending and Ascending Yuga cycles are to be replaced by 25920 years. The length of a year is to be taken at 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds, instead of 360 days. Sandhya or Sandhyansh are meant to give flexibility to the number of years falling under each Yuga. Some indefinite number of years pass in between the descending and ascending cycles of Kali Yuga.

Eminent Historian Pandit Bhagwaddutt Satyashrava has recorded in his book titled 'Bharatvarsh ka Brihad Itihas' that the Era of Lord Ram was in the Sandhi period of Treta and Dwapara and this could be around 5200 years before the beginning of Vikram Samvat. He has also added that Shri Krishna was born towards the end of Dwapara whereas Kali Era started after his departure for the Heaven. This was around 3200 years before Vikram Samvat, thus giving a gap of just about 2000 years between Ramayan and Mahabharat Eras. Shri Satyashrava had emphatically added that "Treta and Dwapara Eras certainly did not consist of lakhs of years" (*Satyashrava 2000, 7th chapter*). Shri Satyashrava has also expressed

the opinion that, in ancient Sanskrit, the word 'Sahasrani' added to the number of years normally meant 'approximately' (Chapter 11, pg 580). He has also given a very different explanation for the elucidation of the gap between descending and ascending cycle of Chaturyugas, which aims at explaining the meaning of *Devyuga* alias *Divyayuga* and also aims at reconciling cycle of 24000 years with 25920 years. He has referred to the extracts from the text of Ramayan and Mahabharat, wherein reference has been made to *Devyuga* prevailing prior to Krityuga. He has also said that there could be some extra years between Descending and Ascending cycles. It needs to be noted that the dating of astronomical references in Ramayan and Mahabharat, done by making use of planetarium softwares, has proved his assertions correct. The astronomical dates of Ramayan relate the Epic to 5100 BCE, whereas the astronomical dates of Mahabharat relate the events narrated therein to 3100 BCE; a time gap of 2000 years (*Satyashrava 2000, 7th chapter,* Shri Krishna has born in Dwapar and Kali ki Sandhi, Page 163).

It needs to be taken note of that in all these ancient time-reckoning calculations length of a year was taken as 360 days whereas, actually, it is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. This difference in the length of the year would also require adjustment in the span of Yugas. Further, if we accept the Chaturyuga cycle of 43,20,000 years, then are we prepared to declare that *Kali Yuga* consists of 4,32,000 years, of which 4,27,000 are still left? Are we able to explain what happened during those 9,27,000 years, which would be the time gap between the eras of Shri Ram, who is said to have lived in Treta Yug, and of Shri Krishna, who lived at the end of Dwapara yuga?

We, therefore, make a very humble request to the sages and scholars to review the traditional interpretation of *Chaturyuga* and bring back Ramayan and Mahabharat from the realm of mythology to the domain of history, to which they belong in reality. Only after that, we shall be able to make a rightful claim that India's civilization is the oldest in the world during the current Holocene period and that Aryans were the originals of India who have been developing indigenous Vedic Civilization for thousands of years.

Aryabhata had determined the beginning of the Kali era on 19th February, 3012 BCE (Aryabhatia; Gitikapada - 5 & Kalakriyapada – 10). He had written that 3600 years of Kali-era had elapsed when he completed writing the book at the age of 23.

According to the Surya Sidhanta, Kali Yuga began at midnight (00:00) on 18th February, 3102 BCE. According to the astronomer and mathematician Aryabhata, the Kali Yuga started in 3102 BCE. He finished his book *Aryabhattiyam* in 499 CE, in which he gives the exact year of the beginning of Kali Yuga. He writes that he wrote the book in the year 3600 of the Kali Age at the age of 23. As it was the 3600th year

of the Kali Age when he was 23 years old, and given that Aryabhata was born in 476 CE, the beginning of the Kali Yuga would come to (3600 - (476 + 23) + 1 (As only one year elapses between 1 BCE and 1 CE)) = 3102 BCE. (sarojbala.blogspot.in). According to Saha and Lahiri (1955), the beginning of the Kali era in 3102 BCE, is based on the assumption that the grand conjunction of the Sun, the Moon and other five planets was seen at the starting point of Aries. This grand conjunction has actually been displayed by modern-day Stellarium software on 18th -19th February, 3101 BCE (3102 BCE historical year), thus confirming the traditional belief.

Delhi, India (28.70°N, 77.20°E). All seven planets at the entry point of Aries (Mesha) displaying Famous Kali Era Conjunction on 19th February, 3101 BCE, at 7.20 AM (Stellarium Sky shot); Astronomical date 19th February, 3101 BCE, and Historical date 19th February, 3102 BCE

It is, therefore, earnestly requested that our sages, scholars, and scientists make this much-needed correction in the concept of Chaturyuga cycles so that 12000 human years, described in our ancient texts, are not multiplied by 360 days of the northward and southward movement of the Sun. As a result, the length of the Chatur Yuga would not be taken as 43,20,000!

APPENDIX 5

Genealogy charts of rulers of the Mahabharat era and their correlation with Genetic studies

The ancient scholars of India followed the practice of writing the history of their country, its sages and eminent kings. The Ramayan, Mahabharat, and Puranas have recorded in detail the sequential description of the important kings of ancient dynasties. An attempt has been made to reconstruct some of these dynasties by correlating inputs from various sources. Efforts have also been made to determine their time based on scientific evidence. The most prominent lineages, which became the subject of this detailed study, include –

Sr. No.	Names of Dynasty	Sr. No.	Names of Dynasty
1	Suryavansha (Solar dynasty)	2	Nimivansha (Nimi dynasty)
3	Chandravansha (Lunar Dynasty)	4	Puruvansh (Puru dynasty)
5	Kuruvansha (Kuru dynasty)	6	Panchal (Panchal dynasty)
7	Brihadratha (Brihdaratha dynasty)	8	Maurya dynasty etc.

These studies revealed that Vivaswan was the father of many prominent ancient dynasties of India. Many dynasties grew and flourished from his son Manu. There is a reference to ten sons of Vaivasvat Manu; Ikshavaku being the most renowned as he was the father of Suryavansha dynasty of which Shri Ram

was the 64th ruler. The genealogy chart of Suryvansha and Nimivansha kings has been included in my book 'Ramayan Retold with Scientific Evidences'. Some other important ones are listed in the undermentioned Paras.

Emperor Pururava is considered a contemporary of Ikshavaku. Yayati was one of his descendants. Among Yayati's descendants, Yadu and Puru were most talented. The descendants of Yadu were Chandravanshi kings / Yaduvanshi kings (lunar dynasty), who ruled the earth for thousands of years. The most prominent king of this dynasty was Vasudev Krishna, who was the most powerful and most revered during the Mahabharat era. The descendants of Puru were Kuru kings. Wily Duryodhana and Dharmaraj Yudhishthir both belonged to this dynasty.

The 25th descendant of Puru was powerful Emperor Ajamidh. Ajamidh had three sons –

1. Riksha was Ajamidh's son from his first wife, Dhumini. Dhritarashtra and Pandu were the descendants of King Riksha. All the sons of Dhritarashtra, including Duryodhana and Dushasana, were killed during the Mahabharata war. Pandu's five sons - Yudhishthir, Bhima, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev - ruled for 36 years after their victory in the Mahabharata war. They handed over the throne to Abhimanyu's son, Parikshit, before their departure for Heaven.

2. Brihdishu and Neil were the other two sons of Ajamidh. Panchal kings were the descendants of Neil. The most celebrated king of this dynasty was Drupada, whose daughter Draupadi was married to the five Pandava brothers.

3. Emperor Kuru was the grandson of Riksha; his elder son Jahnu was the father of Kuru Dynasty. His second son was Sudhanwa, who was the father of the lineage of Brihdaratha (king of Chedi country). Brihdaratha got killed during the Mahabharat war.

4. The study of the Puranas has revealed that in ancient times, particularly during and after the Mahabharat era, the number of men was much fewer than the number of women. That is why there are many references to many great men having many wives, and through them, they tried to give birth to a large number of male progeny. The objective was to increase the number of men vis-à-vis women. Modern genetic studies also confirm this assumption.

5. The genealogies listed here sequentially mention the names of rulers of Bharatvarsha during the current Holocene period; starting with the time of

Ikshavaku (9500 years ago) to the Maurya dynasty. The history of the post-Maurya empires is well-known.

6. The names of many prominent kings of the dynasties mentioned in Mahabharat are given hereunder in sequential and chronological order. In the event of a king having many sons, the son from whom that dynasty got created is depicted in bold letters and others are shown in the italicized case.

The lineage of Puru and Kuru Kings

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Pururava	2	Ayush
3	Nahush	4	**Yayati,** *yati, sanyati, ayati*
5	**Puru,** *Yadu, Drahu*	6	Janamejaya
7	Prachinvan	8	Pravira
9	Namasyu or Mansu	10	**Charupad**, *Abhayad*
11	Sudyu	12	Bahugava
13	Sanyati	14	Anhyati
15	Raudrashava	16	**Riteshu,** *Kaksheshu, Dharmeshu*
17	**Antisara,** *Rantibhaar*	18	Apratiratha
19	**Aileen** and *Kavva*	20	Sumati
21	Ramya	22	Dushyant
23	**Bharat**	24	Bhardwaj
25	Manyu	26	**Brihatakshya,** *Mahaveerya, Nar*
27	Suhotra	28	Hastin (established Hastinapur city)
29	**Ajmidh** *Dwijmidh, Purumidh*	30	**Riksha,** *Brihadishu, Neil*
31	Samvaran	32	**Kuru**
33	**Jahnu,** *Sudhanwa, Parikshit &...*	34	Surath
35	Vidurath	36	Sarvabhaum
37	Jaisen	38	**Radhik,** *Ruchir*
39	Bheem	40	Ayut, Twaritayu
41	Krodhan	42	Devatithi
43	Rishya	44	Bhimasen *
45	Dilip	46	Pratip
47	**Shantanu,** *Devapi, and Bahlik*	48	**Shantanu**
49	**Vichitravirya,** *Chitrangad, Bhishma*	50	**Pandu, Dhritarashtra,** *Vidur*

51	**Duryodhana** and his 99 brothers (sons of Dhritarashtra)	52	**Yudhishthir,** Bhima, **Arjun,** Nakula and Sahadev, (sons of Pandu)
53	Abhimanyu, son of Arjun	54	Parikshit, son of Abhimanyu
55	**Janmejaya,** *Shrutsen, Ugrasen*	56	Shataniq
57	Sahastranik	58	Ashwamedhaj
59	Aseemkrishna	60	Nemichakra
61	Chitraratha	62	Kaviratha
63	Vrishtiman	64	Sushen
65	Sunith	66	Nrichakshu
67	Sukhinal	68	Pariplava
69	Sunay	70	Medhavi
71	Nripunjaya	72	Durva
73	Timi	74	Brihadratha
75	Sudas	76	Shataniq
77	Durdaman	78	Waheenar
79	Dandapani	80	Nimi
81	Kshemak		

References-

1) Serial number 1-20; 4th part of Vishnu Purana, Chapter 20, Verses 1-5

2) * Vishnu Purana, 4th part, Chapter 20, Verse 7, Bhimasen son of Riksha, Dilip, son of Bhimasen

3) Sr. No. 21-52; Srimad Bhagwad Maha Purana, Navam Skandha, Chapter-22, Verses 19-45

4) In Chapter 50 of the Matsya Purana, the lineage from Ajmidh's son Riksha to Kshemak is available, but there is a lot of difference in names.

Genealogy charts of Chandravanshi / Yaduvanshi rulers (lunar dynasty)

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Pururava	2	Ayush
3	**Nahusha**, *Raji, Anena*	4	Yayati
5	**Yadu**, *Turvasu, Anuva, Puru*	6	Kroshtu
7	Vrjinavan	8	Shavahi or Swati
9	Rusheku	10	Chitraratha

11	Shashabindu	12	Prithushrava
13	**Dharma**, *Suyagya*	14	Ushana
15	Shitapu	16	**Rukmakavach**, *Roochak*
17	Pravrit	18	Jyamagh
19	Vidarbha	20	**Krath**, *Kush and Rampada*
21	Kunti	22	Drishti
23	Nirvriti or Nidhriti	24	Dsharah
25	Vyom	26	Jimut
27	Vikriti	28	Bhimarath
29	Navaranth	30	Dasaratha
31	Shakuni	32	Karambhi
33	Devarat	34	Devakshatra
35	Madhu	36	Kumaravansh
37	Anu	38	Purohotra or Purumitra
39	Aayu	40	Saatvat
41	**Vrishni**, *Andhak, Bhajman, Bhaji, Divya*	42	Yudhajit
43	Anamitra	44	**Vrishni**, *Vasumit*
45	Chitraratha	46	Vidurath
47	Shur	48	Bhajaman
49	Shini	50	Swayambhoja
51	Hridik	52	Devamidh or Devabahu
53	Shur	54	**Vasudeva**, *Anakandundubhi*
55	**Shri Krishna**	56	Pradyumna
57	Anirudh	58	Vajranabh
59	Pratibahu	60	Sucharu

References-

1) Serial number 1-2 Vishnu Purana, Fourth Volume, Sixth Chapter, Verses 32, 73

2) Sr. No. 3, Vishnu Purana, Fourth Volume, Eighth Chapter, Verses 1 to 3

3) Sr. No. 4-5, Vishnu Purana, Fourth Volume, Tenth Chapter, Verse 1, 6

4) Sr. No. 6-19, Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter 23, Verse 30-39

5) Sr. No. 20-41, Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter 24th, Verse 1-7

6) Sr. No. 42-45, Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter 24th, Verse 12-15

7) Sr. No. 46-48, Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapt. 24th, Verse 26-30

8) Serial number 55-60, Vishnu Purana, fourth volume, 15th chapter, verses 37-42

Eminent kings of the Panchala dynasty – ancestry is traced to Dushmanta and Parameshthin, born from second wife Neili of Ajamidh

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Daksha	2	Shanti
3	Sushanti	4	purunjay
5	Daksh	6	Hariashva
7	mudgal	8	Brihdashva
9	Divadas	10	Mitrayu
11	Chyavan	12	Sudas
13	Saudas	14	Sahadev
15	Somak	16	Prishad
17	**Drupada**	18	Dhrishtadhyumna
19	Dhrishtaketu		

Serial No. 1 to 19; Vishnupuran, Fourth Part, 19th Chapter, Verse 56-68.

Note: (1) In Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, chapters 20, 21 and 22 of Navam Skandha, this very lineage of Panchals is included with a few changes.

Genealogy of Brihadratha dynasty, kings of Chedidesh

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	**Sudhanwa** (Kuru's second grandson)	2	Suhotra
3	Kriti	4	Upricharvasu
5	**Brihdaratha**	6	**Jarasandha,** *Kushagra*

Ancient Dynasties of Kali Era - Post-Mahabharat war rulers of Brihdaratha dynasty

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Sahadev s/o Jarasandh	2	**Somapi,** *Marjari, Udayu*
3	Shrutashrava	4	Ayutayu
5	Nirmitra	6	Sunkashatra
7	Rihatsen	8	Karmajit
9	Sritanjay	10	Vipra
11	Shuchi	12	Kshema
13	Suvrata	14	Dharmasutras
15	Sham	16	Dhumatsen
17	Sumati	18	Subal
19	Sunath	20	Satyajit
21	Vishwajeet	22	Ripunjay

1) Sr. No. 1-5; Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter-22, Verse 5

2) Sr. No. 1-4; Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter-22, Verse 8-9

3) Sr. No. 5-2; Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, Navam Skandha, Chapter-22, Verse 46-49

(The last king of Brihdaratha dynasty was Ripunjay or say Puranjaya. His minister Shunak killed his master and anointed his son Pradhyot on the throne.)

Pradhyot Dynasty -The five kings of this dynasty ruled for 138 years

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Pradhyot	2	Palak
3	Vishakhayup	4	Rajak
5	Nandivardhan		

Shishu Nagavansh - The ten kings of this dynasty ruled for 360 years

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Shishunag	2	Kakavarna
3	Kshemadharma	4	Kshetragya

5	Vidhisar	6	Ajatashatru
7	Darbhak	8	Ajay
9	Nandivardhan	10	Mahanandipad

1) Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, 12th Skandha, Chapter-1, Verse 2-3
2) Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, 12th Skandha, Chapter-1, Verse 3-4
3) Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, 12th Skandha, Chapter-1, Verse 5-12
4) They ruled for 360 years. They were all very authoritative, and the last king was ruthless as well. Chanakya defeated Mahanandipad and established the Maurya dynasty.

Maurya Dynasty - Ten kings of the Maurya dynasty ruled for 137 years

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Chandragupta Maurya	2	Varisar
3	Ashokavardhan	4	Suyash
5	Dasharath	6	Sanyut
7	Shalishuk	8	Somasharma
9	Shatadhanva	10	Brihdaratha

1) Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, 12th Skandh, Chapter-1, Verse 13-15
2) Vishnu Purana, fourth volume, chapter 24, verse 30 - Dasharath, son of Suyash
3) Pushyamitra Shunga killed Brihadratha and established Shunga dynasty

Shunga Dynasty - Ten rulers of this dynasty ruled for 112 years

Sr. No.	Names of kings	Sr. No.	Names of kings
1	Pushyamitra Shunga	2	Agnimitra
3	Sujyestha	4	Vasumitra
5	Bhadrak	6	Pulind
7	Ghosh	8	Vajramitra
9	Bhagwat	10	Devabhuti

1) Srimad Bhagavad Mahapuran, 12th Skandha, Chapter-1, Verse-16-18

The period covered by these dynasties

These genealogies include the names of only eminent kings of any dynasty. Shatpath Brahmin has recorded that there was a custom of singing the praises of a king and his ancestors, during any significant religious or social ceremonies in ancient India. It used to be the responsibility of a Suta to sing the praises of the king and his ancestors. Consequently, Sutas tried to maintain a record and sing praises of ancestors of kings in chronological order. When he could not recollect the names before the narrated ancestry of any king, he would trace the origin of the dynasty to the Sun or the Moon. Probably for this reason, the Puranas have traced the lineage of the kings of ancient dynasties to the Sun or the Moon.

Greek scholar Magasthanese has recorded that the names and lineages of 154 emperors before Alexander are available in India. Megasthanese compiled such information about India in the form of ***Indika***, which is now a lost work. However, it survives in the form of quotations by the later writers. It also needs to be clarified here that there are many references in the Puranas, in which it has been written that a king ruled for ten thousand years, fifty-six thousand years or even sixty-four thousand years. Different Puranas have also given different durations of any event. For example, the time of co-habitation of Urvashi and Pururava is given 55 years in Matsya Purana, 64 years in Vayu Purana and Harivansh Purana, but sixty thousand years in Vishnu Purana. In the words of Pandit Bhagavaddatta Satyashrava, "In ancient Sanskrit, the expression *sahasrani* (i.e. thousand) added to the number of years meant 'approximately' (Satyashrava, 2000; 2nd volume, chapter 12, page 58). I fully agree with this interpretation of the word *sahasrani*, affixed to the number of years in ancient Sanskrit, given by Pandit Bhagavaddatta Satyashrava.

During the Mahabharat era, human beings normally enjoyed a long life. Most of the kings, who participated in the War, were accompanied by their sons and grandsons. When they were participating in that catastrophic war, they had already ruled for 40-60 years. Yudhishthir had ruled for more than 50 years, including the period of his exile. Dhritarashtra, Somadatta, Balhika, Drupad, all of them had already ruled for more than 50 years each at the time of war. War was a profession for Kshatriyas which continued irrespective of their age.

From the details given above, we get a fair idea about the kings belonging to the dynasties right from Suryavansh to Mauryavansh. In other words, the names of rulers, who ruled between 9,000 BP to 2,300 BP, have been listed in the genealogy as mentioned above. If we multiply 154, the number of rulers before Alexander listed by Magasthanese, with the average tenure of just 45 years, that would work out to be 6930 years prior to Alexander and thus take us back to 9000 BP. We could, therefore, conclude that at least for the last 9,000 years, the civilized

human beings have been living and developing continuously as well as indigenously in India.

Genetic studies have a close connection with the genealogies of ancient kings/ populations -

The genetic studies of world populations have been going on for a long time now. Very few such researches into the genes of Brahmins and Kshatriyas are available whereas genome profiles of various tribes are found in considerable numbers. The most comprehensive and detailed genome studies have been carried out by geneticists like Caville-Safroza, Kenneth Kennedy, V.R. Rao, Gyaneshwar Chaubey and many more. The conclusions of these anthropological researches are summarized as follows -

1. The continuation of DNA in India has been going on continuously for the last 60,000 years, whereas there is a continuation of DNA of civilized human beings for almost 11,000 years.

2. According to genome studies, the genetic profiles of all humans living in the north, south, east and west of India are similar. Genes of North Indians, Dravidians and Tribals are also identical. Hindus, Muslims, Christians living in India also have identical gene profile.

3. There is no evidence of gene inflow of any Aryans from outside into India because according to genome studies, all castes and tribes have developed indigenous genes during the Holocene period, i.e. during the last 11,000 years. Even the genes of the Eurasian lineages have evidence of inflow of genes from Indian populations. All these studies indicate that the Aryans must have gone from India to propagate and disseminate their civilization and culture in other countries.

4. After the genetic study of the Bhil, Kol and Gond tribes mentioned in the Ramayan, the eminent genetic of Estonian Biocenter, Tartu - Shri Gyaneshwar Chaubey wrote that their DNA profile has continuation for the last 11,000 years, with no evidence of any significant genetic inflow from outside India. Their DNA matches that of other castes and tribes settled in India.

5. About 5,000 years ago in South Asia (rather worldwide), the number of males declined significantly as compared to females. This situation appears to be related to the Mahabharat war. In the Stri Parva of Mahabharat, there had been repeated lamentations about the loss of lives

of millions of men during the catastrophic war. Even 18 Akshauhini forces, which were killed, would consist of more than 45 lakhs; 218700*18 soldiers + helpers and facilitators. Most of the women were crying with great grief over the death of their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons.

6. The time of Ikshavaku, the first king of the Surya dynasty, is about 9,000 years ago because he was the 64th ancestor of Shri Ram. The astronomical dating of events narrated in Rigveda refers to the sky views observed around 9000-8000 years back, whereas sequential astronomical dates of sky views of references in Ramayan pertain to around 5100-5000 BCE. The sequential sky simulations of astronomical references in Mahabharat relate the events narrated therein to 3200-3100 BCE.

7. At the same time, genome studies give direct evidence of the continuation of DNA of civilized humans in India for the last 10,000 years ago. Genetic studies of the tribes mentioned in the Ramayan, like Bhil, Kol and Gond that also existed during Mahabharat, time prove that the DNA of people has developed in India continuously for 10,000 years.

8. The names of many castes and tribes indicated in the Puranas and Epics are still the same. Mahabharat has listed at least 367 tribes and castes, most of which still exist under the same names or with changed names. A comprehensive list has been uploaded by Shri Laxman Bardak on https://www.jatland.com/home/List_of_Mahabharata_people_and_places

There have been genetic studies of many of these tribes and castes which prove that their existence has been continuous in India for last more than 10,000 years. It is, thus, clear that Epics and Puranas do not tell any imaginary and mythological stories. These reveal the true story of the development of ancient Indian civilization and culture, revealed through Vedas and Epics.

The need of the time is that we should stop trying to convert our real history into mythology. We should correlate multi-disciplinary scientific evidence to reconstruct the real history of ancient India and in the process also determine the historicity of Ramayan and Mahabharat eras. This would not only generate shared pride in our ancient heritage but also raise our self-esteem in front of the whole world.

APPENDIX 6

List of Scientists and Scholars who provided valuable inputs

For writing this Book, many valuable inputs and critical comments were received from several scientists and scholars. These proved to be of great value in writing this Book objectively, scientifically, and logically. Most of the scientific facts and evidence included herein are outcomes of research carried out, and papers presented by the scientists of corresponding discipline of science. Only those supporting scientific proofs have been included, which got endorsed by almost all those present during seminars and conferences. I am indeed grateful to all of them for adding authenticity to the contents of this Book.

Some important seminars and conferences were held on 30-31 July 2011, 23-24 February 2014, 1st November 2014, 17-23 September 2015, 4th February 2016 and 16th July 2016. **The names of scientists and scholars, who presented papers, discussed and endorsed the research outcomes on different subjects relied upon in this book are given below in alphabetic order, with their designations on the dates of their participation -**

1. Dr A.R. Chaudhri, Prof. of Geology, Kurukshetra University (Geology)
2. Dr Ankit Agarwal, Lecturer in Ancient History and Archaeology, PGDAV College, Delhi
3. Sh. Ashok Bhatnagar, Astronomer, Former ADG, IMD and Former Director of Positional Astronomy Centre, Kolkata (Astronomy)

4. Dr B.K. Bhadra, Scientist, Regional Remote Sensing Centre, Jodhpur under ISRO, i.e. Indian Space Research Organization (Space scientist)
5. Dr B.R. Mani, Secretary, Indian Archaeology Society and Director-General, National Museum (Archaeology)
6. Dr C.M. Nautiyal, Scientist-in-charge, Radiocarbon Dating, Birbal Sahni Institute of Paleobotany (BSIP), Lucknow (Paleobotany)
7. Dr Gyaneshwar Chaubey, Scientist, Estonian Biocentre, Tartu (Genetic studies)
8. Dr J.R. Sharma, Director, Regional Remote Sensing Centre, Jodhpur under ISRO, i.e. Indian Space Research Organization (Space scientist)
9. Sh. K.N. Dikshit, Chairman, Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi (Archaeology)
10. Prof. K. S. Valdiya (Padma Bhushan), Eminent Geologist, JNCASR, Bangalore (Geology)
11. Dr K. Sinha, Former Scientist, Aryabhatt Research Institute of Observational Sciences, Nainital (Astronomy)
12. Dr Kapil Kapoor, Former Pro-Vice Chancellor of JNU, great scholar and Editor of 'Encyclopedia of Hinduism'.
13. Sh. Kulbhushan Mishra, Research Associate, Indian Archaeology Society & PhD student, Deptt of Anthropology, Delhi University (Archaeology)
14. Dr Navaratna S. Rajaram, Mathematician, Linguist and Reputed Author
15. Mr Peeyush Sandhir, Vedic Astronomer and Company Secretary, Roorkee
16. Dr Premendra Priyadarshi, MD, FRCP (Edinburgh), Paleobotanist and Geneticist, Author of 'In Quest of the Dates of Vedas'
17. Sh. R.S. Bisht (Padma Shri), Former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India (Archaeology)
18. Dr Rajeev Sarasvat, Scientist F, National Institute of Oceanography, Goa – Oceanography
19. Dr Rajiv Nigam, Scientist-G, National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Dona Paula, Goa- Oceanography
20. Prof. Ranjan Gupta, Prof. of Astronomy, **Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune** (Astronomy)
21. Ms Rathnasree, Director, Nehru Planetarium, New Delhi (Astronomy)
22. Dr S. Kalyanaraman, Eminent Author, Historian and Director, Sarasvati Research Centre.

23. Prof. Vasant Shinde, Vice-Chancellor, Deccan College, Pune (Archaeology)
24. Prof. V.H. Sonavane, Former Professor, Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Baroda (Archaeology)
25. Dr.V.J. Loveson, Senior Principal Scientist, Geological Oceanography Division, National Institute of Oceanography, Dona Paula, Goa
26. Dr V. R. Rao, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Delhi University (Genetic Studies)
27. Dr Vimal Tiwari, Assistant Archaeologist, Uttar Pradesh Archaeological Survey, Lucknow (Archaeology)

The names and designations of Sanskrit, Hindi and English scholars and of other learned personalities, who contributed in this kind of scientific research on ancient historical events and provided valuable assistance in writing this Book–

1. Dr Amba Kulkarni, HoD, Department of Sanskrit, Central University, Hyderabad
2. Dr Baldevanand Sagar, Incharge of Sanskrit News Broadcast, All India Radio
3. Prof. C. Upendra Rao, Professor, Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies, JNU
4. Sh. Come Carpentier, Convener, Editorial Board of World Affairs
5. Sh. Darshan Lal Jain, President, Saraswati Nadi Shodh Sansthan
6. Dr Divya Tripathi, HoD, Department of Sanskrit, Centenary DAV College, Faridabad
7. Shri Gaurav Garg, Assistant Commissioner (UT), Indian Revenue Service
8. Shri K V Krishna Murthy, Chairman, Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas
9. Smt. Poonam Kishore Saxena, IRS (retd.), Former Chairperson, CBDT
10. Dr Ram Autar Sharma, author of 'In the Footsteps of Shri Ram.'
11. Smt. Sangeeta Gupta, IRS, Reputed Artist, Author, Painter and Film Producer
12. Shri Vijay Singal, Former Chief Commissioner of Income-tax and Reputed Author

The names of the chief guests and guests of honour, who provided motivation and inspiration by appreciating the multi-disciplinary scientific research work to determine the historicity and antiquity of events narrated in Vedas and Epics, are given below –

1. Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (Bharat Ratna), Former President of India

2. Hon'ble Justice Ashok Bhan, Former Hon'ble Justice of the Supreme Court of India and Chairman, NCDRC
3. Dr David Frawley (Padma Vibhushan), Eminent Vedic scholar and Author
4. Dr Kapil Kapoor, Eminent Scholar, Author and Linguist
5. Prof. Kaptan Singh Solanki, Governor of Haryana State of India
6. Dr Karan Singh, Member, Rajya Sabha and President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)
7. Dr Krishan Gopal Ji, Joint General Secretary, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
8. Dr Mahesh Sharma Ji, Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Govt. Of India
9. Shri Manbir Singh, IFS, Former Secretary (Economic Relations) and Member, UPSC
10. Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Minister of Earth Sciences and of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India
11. Dr Sonal Mansingh (Padma Vibhushan), President of CICD and most Eminent Expert in traditional Indian Dances.
12. Justice Som Nath Aggarwal, Former Hon'ble Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court and Eminent Author
13. Dr Tankeshwar Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Jambeshwar University of Science and Technology (GJU), Hissar, Haryana
14. Prof. Y Sudarshan Rao, Chairman, Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

The names of Institutions and Government Departments which provided some precious inputs are as under -

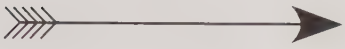
1. Archaeological Survey of India
2. Indian Archaeology Society
3. Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences
4. National Institute of Oceanography
5. Geological Survey of India
6. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Jodhpur Centre
7. Anthropological Survey of India
8. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan

9. Gita Press, Gorakhpur
10. Estonian Biocentre, Tartu
11. Shri Ram Sanskritik Shodh Sansthan

The web/blog links to presentations made by scientists and scholars during Seminars, Conferences, and Exhibitions are as under -

1. Seminar on Scientific Dating of Ancient Events before 2000 BC - full papers 30-31 July 2011- http://bit.ly/2r8ke1A
2. Determining Cultural Continuity since Vedic and Epic Eras 23-24 Feb 2014 - http://bit.ly/2FDUCNd
3. Chronology of Indian Culture since the Beginning of Holocene through Scientific Evidences, 16th July 2016 - http://bit.ly/2DfYZ2k
4. Cultural Continuity since Vedic and Epic Eras 1st Nov 2014 - http://bit.ly/2Dg9WBe
5. Exhibition on Cultural Continuity from Rigveda to Robotics 17-23 Sept 2015 - http://bit.ly/2mz0QoW
6. Rigveda to Robotics, 3-4 Feb 2016 at Hisar - http://bit.ly/2FDUCNd

APPENDIX 7



Glossary

(Part 1- A list on names of characters of Mahabharat

Part 2 - A list of specialised terms or unusual words)

Part 1 - List on names of characters of Mahabharat

The Mahabharat is the world›s longest epic and one of India's most popular and important scriptures. Given below is a glossary of more than 130 names mentioned in about one lakh verses of Mahabharat by Sage Vyas -

1. **Abhimanyu:** Son of Arjun and Subhadra; married to Uttara, daughter of King Virata. His son Parikshit became the king after Yudhishthir abdicated the throne.
2. **Adhirath:** Karna's foster-father; chief charioteer of Dhritarashtra.
3. **Ajatashatru:** Another name for Yudhishthir, meaning "one who has no enemy".
4. **Amba:** Eldest daughter of the king of Kashi, abducted by Bhishma; reborn as Shikhandin.
5. **Ambalika:** The youngest daughter of the king of Kashi, married to Vichitravirya; mother of Pandu.
6. **Ambika:** The cecond daughter of the king of Kashi, married to Vichitravirya; mother of Dhritarashtra
7. **Apsara:** Wives of the heavenly Gandharvas, or angels.

8. **Arjun:** The third of the Pandava brothers, born of Lord Indra; he is the greatest archer ever born on earth. The Bhagavad Gita was narrated to him by Lord Krishna.
9. **Ashwatthama:** Son of guru Dronacharya, last supreme commander of the Kaurava force; he killed Pandava children and Panchals in their sleep.
10. **Ashvins:** The twin Nakshatras which symbolize youth and handsomeness; Madri gave birth to Nakul and Sahadev by invoking them.
11. **Bakasur:** A voracious, cruel, and mighty Rakshasa, who lived in a cave near the city of Ekachakrapura; Bhima killed him and relieved the citizens from constant fear.
12. **Balaram:** Elder brother of Sri Krishna; born to Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva.
13. **Bhagadatta:** King of Pragjyotishapur of North-east, a Kaurava ally.
14. **Bhardwaj:** He was the father of Drona, the preceptor of the Kauravas & Pandavas.
15. **Bharata:** Son of King Dushyant and Shakuntala, who ruled over Puru kingdom for many years.
16. **Bhima:** The second Pandava brother who surpassed in physical prowess, as he was born of the wind-god and Kunti.
17. **Bhishma:** Old grandsire of the Pandavas and Kauravas; he was the eighth child of King Shantanu and Goddess Ganga. He vowed life-long celibacy so that his father could marry Satyavati. He was the supreme commander of the Kaurava army.
18. **Bibhatsu:** One of Arjun's names, meaning a hater of reprehensible acts.
19. **Brihadratha:** Celebrated commander of three regiments, reigned over Magadha.
20. **Brihannala:** Arjun's assumed name while living as a eunuch at Virat's court incognito.
21. **Bhurishrava**: A prince of the Balhika, an ally of the Kauravas, and son of Somadatta
22. **Chitrangad:** Eldest son of King Shantanu, born of Satyavati; he was brother of Bhishma. He was killed at an early age in battle with a Gandharva of the same name.
23. **Chitrangada**: Chitrangada was the princess of Manipur; she married Arjun and gave birth to Babhruvahan, who became the king of Manipur.

24. **Chitrasena**: Chitrasena was the King of the Gandharvas who prevented the Kauravas from putting up their camp near the pond; he had taken Duryodhana as a prisoner, when Yudhishthir got him released later on.
25. **Daruka:** Name of Shri Krishna's charioteer.
26. **Devaki:** Sri Krishna's mother and wife of Vasudeva.
27. **Devavrata:** Another name of Bhishma Pitamah.
28. **Devayani:** The beautiful daughter of Shukracharya, and wife of King Yayati. She bore him two sons, Yadu and Turvasu.
29. **Dharmagranthi:** Nakula's name when he was in disguise at king Virata's court.
30. **Dharmaraj /Dharmaputra:** Names for Yudhishthir, the son of Dharma or Yama.
31. **Dhananjaya:** One of the names of Arjun as he lived in the middle of unlimited wealth earned by him through his valour.
32. **Dhaumya:** Preceptor of the Pandavas, who accompanied them during their exile to the Kurujangala forest.
33. **Dhrishtadhyumna:** Supreme commander of the Pandava forces, son of King Drupad and eldest brother of Draupadi.
34. **Dhritarashtra:** Elder son of Vichitravirya and Ambika, born blind; father of Duryodhana and the hundred Kauravas. He was the brother of Pandu.
35. **Draupadi:** Daughter of Drupada, King of Panchal. She married all the five Pandavas, though Arjun had won her in the Swayamvar.
36. **Drona:** Son of Sage Bhardwaj and Kripi; father of Ashwatthama; he had learnt military art from Parashuram. He provided all-round education to the Kaurava and Pandava princes, including training in martial art.
37. **Drupada:** King of Panchal, father of Draupadi who was married to the Pandavas; also the father of Shikhandin and Dhrishtadhyumna.
38. **Durjaya:** Duryodhana's brother who was sent to attack Bhima to save Karna's life, but lost his own.
39. **Duryodhana:** First son of King Dhritarashtra; he was the leader of Kaurava Forces. He illegally wrested the throne from the Pandavas and then forced war on them.
40. **Dushala:** Daughter of King Dhritarashtra, sister of Duryodhana; married to Jayadratha who was king of Sindhu-Sauvira.

41. **Dushasana:** Duryodhana's brother who dragged Draupadi to the hall of assembly by her hair and tried to strip her naked but failed, due to Lord Krishna's divine intervention.
42. **Dvaipayan:** Another name of Sage Vyas because he was born on an island (dveepa).
43. **Gandhari:** Daughter of King of Gandhar; was married to Dhritarashtra and was the mother of the hundred Kauravas brothers.
44. **Gandharvas:** Celestial beings, specialists in music and medicine; prepared soma juice for the gods.
45. **Ganga:** The goddess, mother of Bhishma. Its flow was diverted towards north-eastern India with the efforts of King Bhagirath.
46. **Ghatotkacha:** Son of Bhima from demoness Hidimba.
47. **Govinda:** Another name of Shri Krishna, meaning the cow-keeper, which was his occupation as a cowherd in Gokula during his childhood days.
48. **Hari / Hrishikesha:** Names of Shri Krishna who was believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
49. **Hidimba:** A female belonging to Rakshasa tribe; was married to Bhima and she gave birth to Ghatotkach.
50. **Indra:** King of gods; Kunti gave birth to Arjun after invoking him; he gave many divine weapons to Arjun.
51. **Janamejaya:** Son of Parikshit and king of Hastinapur; he conducted the yajna when Vaishampayan narrated the entire story of Mahabharat composed by Sage Vyas.
52. **Jarasandh:** Powerful king of Magadh and father-in-law of Kamsa, who was killed by Lord Krishna and Bhima for his cruelty and atrocities.
53. **Jayadratha:** King of Sindhu-Sauvira; he was married to Duryodhana's sister Dushala.
54. **Kamsa:** Kamsa married the two daughters of Jarasandh and put his sister Devaki and her husband Vasudeva in jail. Kamsa was finally killed by Shri Krishna s/o Devaki.
55. **Karna:** Son of unmarried Kunti, born of Sun god; brought up by Radha and Adhirath, the charioteer, as their own son.
56. **Kaunteya:** Another name of Arjun, who was the son of Kunti.

57. **Kaurava:** Belonging to Kuru dynasty; mainly sons of Dhritarashtra, led by Duryodhana.
58. **Kichak:** Commander-in-chief of the army of king Virat of Matsya Desh; was killed by Bhima for his misbehavior with Draupadi.
59. **Kripa:** Preceptor of Kaurava and Pandava princes; his sister Kripi was married to Drona.
60. **Kritavarman:** Warrior belonging to one of the Yadava tribes; he fought on behalf of Kauravas and assisted Ashwatthama in killing sons of Draupadi in their sleep.
61. **Kunti:** Sister of Lord Krishna's father, given in adoption to king Kuntibhoj; she was married to king Pandu and was the mother of five Pandava brothers.
62. **Kuntibhoj:** Father of Kunti; fought on behalf of Pandavas during Mahabharat war.
63. **Laxman Kumar:** Son of Duryodhana, killed during the war.
64. **Madhusudan:** Another name of Shri Krishna as he had killed demon Madhu.
65. **Madri:** Second wife of king Pandu, mother of Nakul and Sahadev; she was the sister of king Shalya of Madra Desh who fought against her sons during the war.
66. **Markandeya:** A great sage who consoled Pandavas during 12 years of their exile with his learned and soothing sermons.
67. **Matali:** Charioteer of Indra who took Arjun to the kingdom of gods.
68. **Mayasur:** He escaped from forest fire with the help of Arjun and Shri Krishna; he constructed the exquisite assembly hall in which Yudhishthir conducted Rajsuya Yajna.
69. **Nakula:** Fourth of Pandava brothers, born to Madri of Ashwin Nakshatras; was extremely handsome.
70. **Panchali:** Draupadi, Queen of the Pandavas, daughter of King Drupada.
71. **Pandavas:** The descendants of King Pandu, who were harassed by Duryodhana and forced to fight the war against Kauravas.
72. **Pandu:** Second son of Vichitravirya and Ambalika; he succeeded to the throne of Hastinapur after his father's death, as his elder brother Dhritarashtra was born blind. He was the father of the five Pandava brothers.
73. **Parashar:** A great sage, and father of Sage Veda Vyas.

74. **Parikshit:** He was son of Abhimanyu by his wife Uttara; grandson of Arjun and father of Janamejaya. He succeeded Yudhishthir on the throne of Hastinapur.
75. **Partha:** Another name of Arjun; he was son of Pritha, another name of Kunti.
76. **Paurava:** A descendant of Puru of the lunar race.
77. **Phalguni:** Another name of Arjun as he was born in Uttar Phalguni Nakshatra.
78. **Pitamah:** Bhishma, literal meaning grandfather.
79. **Pradyumna:** Name of Sri Krishna's son.
80. **Pratipa:** A king of the lunar dynasty and father of King Shantanu.
81. **Pritha:** Name of the mother of five Pandava brothers; also known as Kunti.
82. **Purushottam:** Sri Krishna, means the Supreme Being.
83. **Purochana:** An architect who built a beautiful wax palace for Pandavas in Varanavat.
84. **Puru:** Sixth king of the lunar race, youngest son of Yayati and Sharmishtha; his descendants were the Pauravas from which came the Kauravas and Pandavas.
85. **Radha:** Foster mother of Karna; she brought him up fondly as her own son.
86. **Radheya:** Another name of Karna, who was brought up as a son by Radha, the wife of the charioteer Adhirath.
87. **Rohini:** Another wife of Vasudeva and mother of Balaram.
88. **Sahadev:** Youngest of the five Pandava brothers, son of Madri, whose father was one of the twin Ashvins (physicians of heaven).
89. **Sanjay:** Son of Gavalgani, a confidant of Dhritarashtra; he was blessed with divine vision by Sage Vyas; he gave a blow by blow account of Mahabharat war to blind Dhritarashtra. He was the first one to recite Bhagavad Gita to Dhritarashtra after hearing Krishna narrating the same to Arjun in the battlefield.
90. **Sarasvati:** A mighty river that rose from the Himalayas and flowed on to the sea.
91. **Sarvadaman Bharata:** Name of the heroic son of Shakuntala and Dushyant.
92. **Satyajit:** A Panchal prince, a hero who prevented Drona from taking Yudhishthir as a prisoner, while Arjun was away answering a challenge by Samshaptakas.
93. **Satyaki:** A great Yadava warrior, a friend of Krishna and Arjun, fought very bravely on behalf of Pandavas.

94. **Satyavati:** Mother of Sage Vyas and wife of King Shantanu. She bore two sons, Chitrangad and Vichitravirya.

95. **Savyasachi:** Another name of Arjun because he could use his bow with the same skill with either of the hands.

96. **Shakuni:** King of Gandhar, Duryodhana's maternal uncle, and Queen Gandhari's brother. He was a skilful gambler and a cheat who beguiled the Pandavas into playing dice and defeated them; after that he sent them to live in the forest for 13 years.

97. **Shakuntala:** The abandoned daughter of Menaka and Vishwamitra. She was adopted and raised by sage Kanva in a forest retreat.

98. **Shalya:** Ruler of Madra Desha, brother of Madri, and maternal uncle of the Nakul and Sahadev, two Pandava brothers. However, he fought from the side of Duryodhana.

99. **Shantanu:** A king of the Puru dynasty, son of Pratipa. Father of Bhishma.

100. **Shikhandin:** Drupad's son; a female turned into a man, fought on behalf of Pandavas and was instrumental in killing of Bhishma.

101. **Saindhava:** King of Sindhu-Sauvira, also known as Jayadratha.

102. **Shishupal:** He was the King of Chedi, killed by Shri Krishna at the time of Rajasuya sacrifice organized by Dharmaputra Yudhishthir.

103. **Shiva:** One of the gods of Hindu trinity; he gave divine weapons to Arjun.

104. **Subhadra:** Wife of Arjun, sister of Shri Krishna and mother of Abhimanyu.

105. **Sudeshna:** Wife of king Virat; Draupadi served her under the assumed name of Sairandhari in the 13th year of living incognito.

106. **Susharma:** King of Trigarta, a supporter of the Kauravas who backed the proposal to invade Matsya, Virata's country.

107. **Subala:** The king of Gandhar and father of Gandhari who was married to Dhritarashtra.

108. **Takshak:** He was the Naga king who lived in the city of Takshashila after being displaced by Pandavas from Khandavavan.

109. **Ugrasen:** Father of Kamsa and king of Mathura.

110. **Ulupi:** Naga princess of North-eastern kingdom of Manipur; married to Arjun.

111. **Vajranabh:** He was the great-grandson of Lord Krishna, grandson of Pradyumna and son of Aniruddha; he was crowned as the king of Indraprastha after Dwarka got submerged.

112. **Vaishampayan**: Chief disciple of sage Vyas, who narrated the entire story of Mahabharat to Janamejaya and through him to the whole of humanity.

113. **Valala:** Bhima's assumed name when he worked as a cook at king Virat's court.

114. **Varuna:** The god of the water and of oceans.

115. **Vasudeva:** Another name of Shri Krishna, son of Vasudeva.

116. **Vayu:** The god of the wind, the father of Bhima after Kunti invoked him.

117. **Vedavyasa:** Another name of Vyas, son of Sage Parashar and Satyavati; he was the author of the Mahabharat.

118. **Vichitravirya:** Younger son of King Shantanu, who succeeded King Chitrangad on the throne of Hastinapur; he had two sons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu.

119. **Vidura:** Son of sage Vyas and a maidservant; he was a counselor to his brother King Dhritarashtra of Hastinapur.

120. **Vikarna:** One of the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra who protested that staking of Draupadi was illegal as Yudhishthir himself was a slave and had lost all his rights.

121. **Virat:** King of Matsya, where the Pandavas lived in disguise during the 13th year of their exile.

122. **Vishnu:** One of the gods of the Hindu holy trinity who maintains and restores the Universe. Lord Krishna was his incarnation.

123. **Vishwakarma:** The architect of the gods; he helped build Dwarka.

124. **Vriddhakshatra:** King of the Sindhu, father of Jayadratha into whose lap his son Jayadratha's head was caused to fall by Arjun.

125. **Vrihsena:** Karna's son who fought very bravely on behalf of Kauravas.

126. **Vrishnis:** Tribals who were devoted to the Pandavas.

127. **Vrikodara:** Bhima's name, meaning wolf-bellied, denoting insatiable appetite.

128. **Vyas:** Compiler of the Vedas, son of sage Prashar and Satyavati; author of Mahabharat.

129. **Yadu:** Son of King Yayati of the lunar race, and founder of the line of the Yadavas in which Shri Krishna was born.

130. **Yaksha:** A class of demi-gods, subjects of Kubera, the god of wealth.

131. **Yama:** God of death; Lord of Dharma, Yudhishthir was his son through Kunti.

132. **Yayati:** The fifth king of the lunar race, and son of King Nahusha. Emperor of the Bharata race; he married Devayani and Sharmishtha.

133. **Yudhishthir:** The eldest of the five Pandava princes and the son of Kunti, born of Dharma, the god of righteousness.

134. **Yuyutsu:** A noble son of Dhritarashtra, who bent his head in shame and sorrow when Dushasana dragged Draupadi by the hair in the Kuru assembly

(Some inputs are taken from under mentioned websites; their contribution is gratefully acknowledged - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Characters_in_the_Mahabharata

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Part 2 - A list of special terms or unusual words in Mahabharat

The Mahabharat is the world's longest epic and one of India's most valued scriptures. Given below is a glossary of many terms used in Mahabharat, which have their roots in Sanskrit and Hindi, therefore, may not be easily understood by those who do not know these languages –

1. **Abhisheka**: The priests conduct Abhisheka by pouring libations on the image of the deity. This term is also used for consecrating someone as a king or as a crown prince.
2. **Agneyastra**: A missile charged with an invocation to the God Agni (Fire).
3. **Akshauhini**: In ancient times, this strong army consisted of 21870 chariots, 21870 elephants, 65610 horses and 109350 foot-soldiers. The charioteers, riders, tent-men, cooks were over and above these numbers.
4. **Akshay Patra**: A wonderful gift given to Yudhishthir by Sun god, which held a never-failing supply of food.
5. **Amavasya**: No-Moon day/night in a month.
6. **Arundhati**: Eighth Star in Saptarshis, i.e. the Big Dipper, which always follows Vasishth and it is known for its piousness and faithfulness to Vasishth.
7. **Aryaputra**: a classical form of address betokening love and respect for the addressee.
8. **Ashlesha**: It is the name of one of the Nakshatras (lunar mansions) in Cancer Constellation.
9. **Ashram**: Hermitage, which is normally the abode of sages and rishis.

10. **Ashvin**: Name of a lunar month, which derives its name from a star called Ashwini Nakshatra.
11. **Ashwamedha Yajna**: A horse sacrifice, which invokes God's blessings to achieve desired objectives.
12. **Astras**: Missiles, which were thrown using launch pads like bows, generally invoking different gods.
13. **Asuras**: Wicked characters who enjoyed harassing good and noble people.
14. **Balhika**: A north-western land known as Bactria, an ally of Duryodhana.
15. **Bhadrapad**: Name of a Lunar month of Rainy Season, which comes after Shrawan.
16. **Bhagirathi**: A major tributary of Ganga. Ancients also used this as another name for Ganga.
17. **Bharatavarsha**: Name for the area south of the Himalayas, also known as Indian subcontinent or Aryavart.
18. **Brahman**: People engaged in teaching and performance of religious rites, one of the four functional divisions which was at the top in society during the Ramayan era.
19. **Brahma**: One of the Trinity of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (nurturer) and Mahesh (Destroyer).
20. **Brahmachari**: An unmarried student devoted to education; lived with his spiritual guide.
21. **Brahmastra**: The most powerful missile among Astras (a mantra invoked weapon).
22. **Brahmalok**: Abode of Brahma, the creator who is a part of Hindu Trinity.
23. **Brahmaraashi**: Storehouse of knowledge, a term also used for Saptarshis or Capricornus.
24. **Brahmarishi**: A great sage who has attained great heights of wisdom and spirituality.
25. **Brihaspati**: The planet Jupiter, also referred to as the preceptor of gods.
26. **Chaitra**: A lunar month, which derives its name from Chitra Nakshatra.
27. **Chaturangini Sena**: Army consisting of four limbs - infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariot-riders.
28. **Chitra**: One of the 27 nakshatras (lunar mansions), located in Virgo constellation.

29. **Devdutt**: Name of Arjun's conch.
30. **Dwapara**: Third of Chaturyuga; Mahabharat war was fought towards the end of Dwapara.
31. **Dwarka**: The capital city of Vrishnis, of Lord Krishna, on the western coast of India.
32. **Dvaitavana**: Forest in which Pandavas lived during their exile; also a lake of this name.
33. **Deeksha**: Initiation of a disciple into a sacred rite/order, by a spiritual teacher.
34. **Gandiva**: Name of Arjun's divine and unfailing bow.
35. **Gandharvas**: A Class Of semi-divine beings, also described as celestial musicians.
36. **Gangadvara**: Where Ganga enters the plain around modern-day Haridwar.
37. **Guru**: Acharya, preceptor or a teacher.
38. **Halayudha**: Plough shaped weapon wielded by Balaram.
39. **Hastinapur**: Capital of the kingdom of Kurus.
40. **Hari**: One of the names of Lord Vishnu; also used for Lord Krishna.
41. **Himavan**: The name for the hills of Himalaya range.
42. **Indraprastha**: Yudhishthir's capital after the division of Kuru kingdom.
43. **Jalanjali**: Offering of water for the emancipation of the souls of the dead (palmful of water).
44. **Jnana**: A Sanskrit word which means knowledge; Jnana yoga means the path of knowledge.
45. **Jyotish**: Refers to the science of astronomy (*ganit jyotish*) and science of astrology (*falit jyotish).*
46. **Kaliyuga**: Fourth of Chaturyuga; started after Parikshit was crowned as the king by Yudhishthir before his departure.
47. **Kamyaka**: Pandavas also lived in this western forest during their exile.
48. **Karma**: Means actions or deeds which have inevitable consequences on the doer.
49. **Kartika**: A lunar month which derives its name from Krittika Nakshatra located in Taurus.
50. **Ketu**: Name was given to one of the two nodes, associated with the occurrence of eclipses.

51. **Krishna Paksha**: The period of the waning phase of Moon, i.e. from full Moon to no Moon.
52. **Krita era**: First and best of the four yugas.
53. **Kshatriyas**: They constitute the functional division assigned to the ruling & army elite.
54. **Kshatrani**: Wife, mother or daughter of a Kshatriya; expression also used for a brave woman.
55. **Kusha**: A kind of grass used in religious ceremonies; is also used for making mats.
56. **Lagna**: Refers to the constellation seen rising from the eastern horizon at any point of time.
57. **Lakshmi**: The Goddess of wealth and well-being, wife of Lord Vishnu.
58. **Maagh**: A lunar month which derives its name from Magha Nakshatra; Bhishma Pitamah's demise was on Maagh Shukla Ashtami.
59. **Mangal**: The name of planet Mars in Hindi. It is also known as Red Planet.
60. **Mantras**: A sacred utterance; the earliest mantras are those of Rigveda.
61. **Margashirsha**: A Lunar Month at the beginning of winter season which falls between Kartika and Paush months.
62. **Naimish**: An eastern forest, where sages have lived through ages and is considered very sacred.
63. **Nakshatras**: Refer to 27 stars located at an approximate distance of 13° from each other and divide the ecliptic into 27 divisions. These are also described as lunar mansions since Moon stays in each of these for about one day.
64. **Nar**: A divine seer associated with Narayan and reborn as Arjun; expression also used for any man.
65. **Narayan**: Vishnu as supreme god associated with Nar and reborn as Krishna
66. **Panchajanya**: Name of Lord Krishna's conch.
67. **Prajapati**: Means the Lord of creatures. In Vedic literature, it may mean Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva.
68. **Purnima**: Also known as Purna-masi. It means full moon night.
69. **Pushya**: One of the 27 nakshatras which has its location in Cancer constellation.
70. **Rahu**: Name was given to one of the two nodes where Moon cuts the path of the Sun.

71. **Rakshasas**: Evil-minded strong beings, also known as ogres, demons or asuras.
72. **Rudra**: Another name for Lord Shiva or Mahesh, the destroyer; a part of Hindu Trinity of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Nurturer), and Mahesh (Destroyer).
73. **Rohini**: A Nakshatra in Vrishabh, i.e. Taurus is known for its faithfulness to Moon; it is named as Aldeberan in Arabic.
74. **Sahasrani**: Its usual meaning is a 'thousand', but in ancient Sanskrit, it was used for the expression 'approximately' or *'lagbhag'*.
75. **Samvatsar**: In Hindi and Sanskrit, a year is called by this name.
76. **Sanskar**: Religious rites or ceremonies performed/observed at different stages in the life of a Hindu.
77. **Sanyasin**: A female hermit or a sage, feminine of Sanyasi.
78. **Saptarshis**: Name given to a group of seven stars, also known as Asterism Big Dipper in Constellation Ursa Major.
79. **Satvatas**: Formed part of Yadava people.
80. **Sharad**: One of the six seasons, in which a year is usually divided; refers to the autumn.
81. **Shishir**: One of the six seasons, in which a year is normally divided; relates to the winter.
82. **Shravan**: A lunar month representing Rainy Season.
83. **Shloka**: A Sanskrit word for stanza or Couplet; it is translated as 'verse' in English.
84. **Shukla paksha**: Waxing phase of Moon in a lunar month.
85. **Shukra**: The name of Planet Venus; it is also referred to as the Preceptor of the Asuras.
86. **Swarga**: Heaven, where the blessed and the noble are received after their death.
87. **Swayamvar**: A ceremony arranged by father to facilitate selection of a suitable man as a husband by his daughter.
88. **Tapasvi**: One who does Tapas or performs austerities and penances.
89. **Tarpan**: Offering of water as an oblation for the emancipation of the soul of the dead.
90. **Tilak**: It is a mark worn usually on the forehead on special religious occasions.
91. **Tithi**: It refers to the date in a lunar month.

92. **Treta yuga:** Second of Chaturyuga; Shri Ram lived in this era.
93. **Upanishads**: Religious texts containing Vedic knowledge and wisdom.
94. **Vaishakh**: One of the lunar months. It derives its name from Vishakhas Nakshatra in Libra.
95. **Varsha Ritu**: It refers to the four-months-long rainy season, also known as Chaumasa.
96. **Vasant Ritu**: One of the six seasons, in which a year is divided. It refers to spring season.
97. **Vedas**: Sacred four books of Hindus: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda, & Atharvaveda.
98. **Yajna**: Also pronounced as Yagya, it refers to a sacrificial ceremony performed according to the procedure prescribed in scriptures to invoke blessings of gods.
99. **Yajnabhumi**: The area earmarked for horse sacrifice rituals, pronounced as *yagyabhumi.*
100. **Yakshas**: A class of celestial beings, usually benevolent but sometimes mischievous.
101. **Yojan**: A measure of distance conventionally considered equal to eight miles. However, it could actually have a different dimension, as the exact length is not known.

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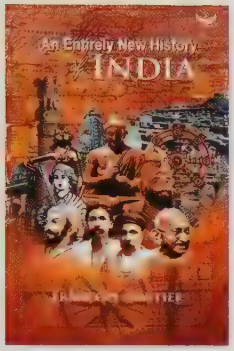

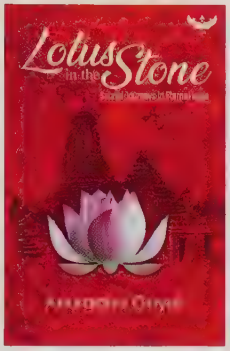

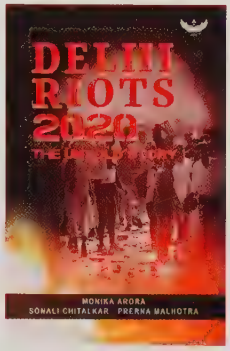

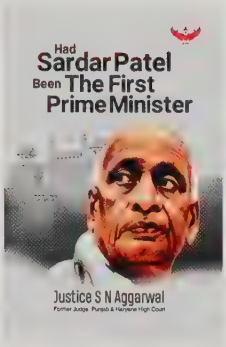

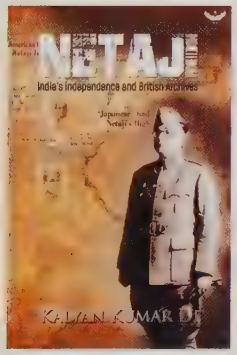

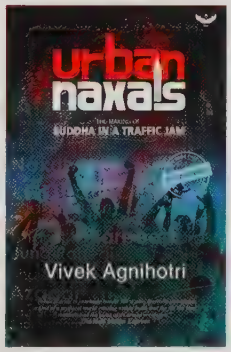

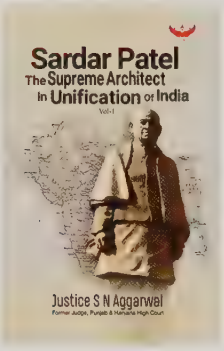

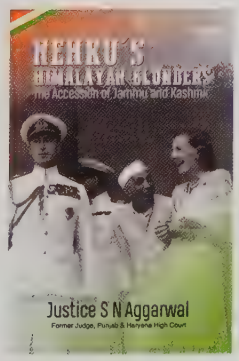

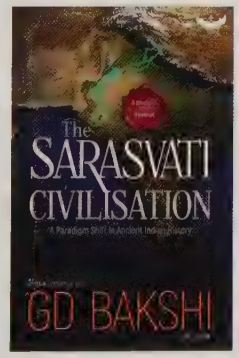

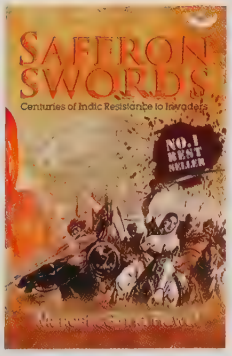

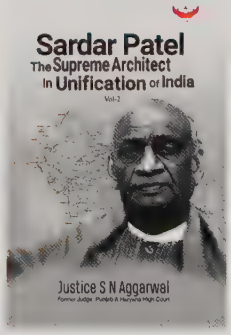

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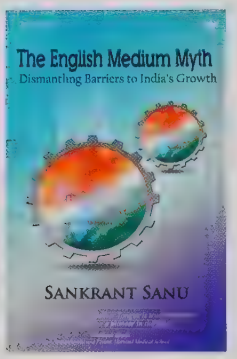

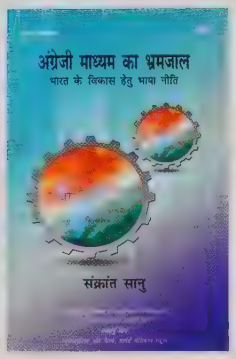

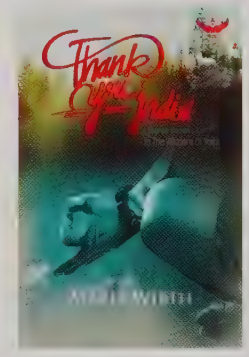

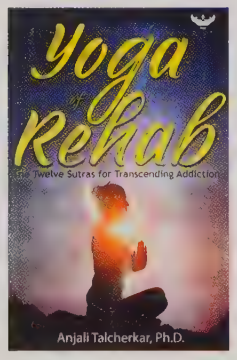

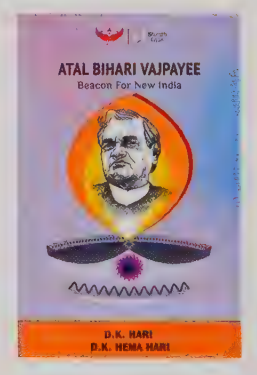

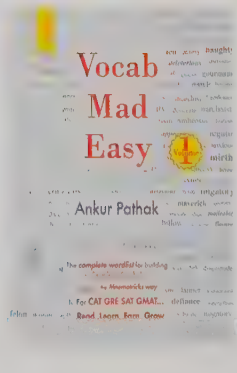

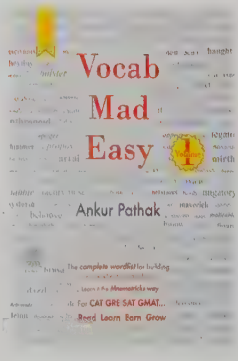

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Saroj Bala

A distinguished officer of the Indian Revenue Service, who retired as a Member of Central Board of Direct Taxes, Smt. Saroj Bala immersed herself in the multi-disciplinary scientific research to ascertain the historicity and antiquity of Vedas and Epics. She remained a Director of Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas (I-SERVE, founded in 2004) from 2009-2017.

Her first book "Historicity of Vedic and Ramayan Eras: Scientific Evidences from the Depths of Oceans to the Heights of Skies", published in 2012, earned her a degree of Doctor of Science from Guru Jambeshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar. The research was undertaken by her under the guidance of Dr A P J Abdul Kalam.

In October 2018, her book "Ramayan ki Kahani, Vigyan ki Jubani' was released, a copy of which was later presented by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath to our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Thereafter, her book 'Ramayan Retold with Scientific Evidences' was released on 5th February 2019; and was discussed in the opening session of the Times Litfest in November 2019.

The author's research methodology is simple, detailed, credible and unique. She extracts all astronomical references sequentially and then generates the corresponding sky-views using Planetarium software. Evidence from archaeology and archaeo-botany, geography and geology, oceanography and remote sensing, etc. is, thereafter, correlated with astronomical date sequence.

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"By adopting a new scientific methodology Dr Saroj Bala is rewriting certain prominent chapters of Ancient Indian History. After her scholarly publications on the dating of Vedic and Ramayana eras, this book on Mahabharata is published with all astronomical dates of references, which prove scientifically the time of events narrated in this epic. Hope soon this wonderful research work will generate exciting curiosity among scholars of Chronology and highlight the vision of its author."

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"This book contains the most authentic astronomical and archaeological determination of dates of the Mahabharat era. Besides this, it is the first attempt at synthesizing the multidisciplinary information into one historical narrative. Goodbye linguistic guesswork!"

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